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# WINEENTHUSIAST<sup>®</sup>

MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2010

**GREAT ITALIAN  
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EVERYDAY MEALS**  
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DOLCETTO & BARBERA

**GRILLING**  
SOUTH AMERICAN  
STYLE

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CALIFORNIA'S TOP  
*Sauvignon  
Blancs*

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SAUCIEST  
COCKTAIL  
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GETAWAY**  
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**BAR  
HOPPING  
THROUGH  
CENTRAL  
EUROPE**

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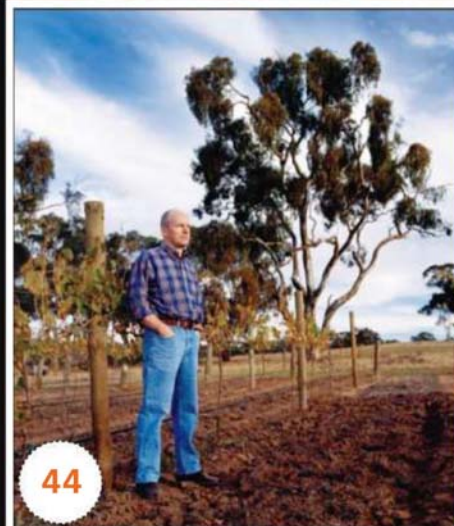
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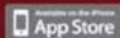


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**Stephen Beaumont** ("Drinking Your Way Through Central Europe") is a long-time *Wine Enthusiast* contributor, documenting the world of beer, spirits and cocktails for two decades, penning six books and traveling innumerable miles in the process. When not drinking or writing about flavorful beverages, he can often be found talking about them, whether at tastings, dinners and seminars or increasingly on bespoke drinks-focused trips such as the Belgian Beer Tour he will be hosting from February 26 to March 6, 2011. Details are available at [worldofbeer.com](http://worldofbeer.com).



**Virginie Boone** ("Practical Hedonist") began her writing career wandering the world for Lonely Planet, contributing to guidebooks on South America, Northern California, France and America's Deep South. She figured it'd be just as much fun to write about her own backyard, Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino, and that led quite naturally to wine, a subject she's covered regularly for the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, a *New York Times* regional newspaper. Her work also appears in *Savor Wine Country Magazine* and on [zesterdaily.com](http://zesterdaily.com); she is the author of *Napa Valley and Sonoma: Heart of California Wine Country*.



**Jon Van Gorder** photographs wine bottles and food in seemingly exotic (or abstract) locales for *Wine Enthusiast*, only he's rarely seen leaving his studio of 25 years in Fairfield, Connecticut. Using the latest in digital capture and working with the fine food stylists Catherine Paukner and Lilia Temple, he's gravitated towards fine food and beverage photography over the last five years. "Creating an image is reconstructing a beautiful memory, and some of my finest memories have been shared with great food and wine."



**Robert Simonson** ("Mark 46") writes about wine, spirits and cocktails and other aspects of The Drinking Life for such publications at the *New York Times*, *Decanter*, *Imbibe*, *Edible Brooklyn*, *Malt Advocate*, as well as his own blog, *Off the Presses* ([offthepresses.blogspot.com](http://offthepresses.blogspot.com)). Prior to his current incarnation as a spirits journalist, he wrote about theater for 15 years—an episode that probably drove him to drink. He lives in the Carroll Gardens section of Brooklyn with his tolerant wife, art critic Sarah Schmerler, and son Asher, who likes to ask him if each wine he's drinking at the moment is "your favorite."

PHOTO TOP MAGGIE JOHN-BEAUMONT



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## MAKE YOUR OWN HOME VINEYARD A REALITY

If you're realistic about what you can achieve, owning and maintaining your own vineyard is not only fun, but offers key insights into what it takes to make great wine.



nyone who's ever visited wine country will tell you that there are few vistas as majestic as neat rows of beautiful vineyards stretching as far as the eye can see. Growing grapes

has become a national pastime, as American as apple pie: there are now wineries in all 50 states, growing grapes and producing wine for sale, and there are thousands of private citizens growing grapes for their own pleasure, their own house cuvée.

About three years ago, I looked out the window of my home in suburban Westchester at the adjacent three-acre parcel and realized that it was a perfect place to plant a vineyard just for pleasure. Just to help me jump-start the project and better envision what might come to be, I installed three large wooden pergola, where I thought the center of the vineyard would be. It looked perfect. I was thrilled.

Perfect from an aesthetic standpoint, but was it feasible? I called my old friend Cesar Baeza, owner of historic Brotherhood Winery in New York's Hudson Valley, and asked him to review this piece of land to see if it was worthwhile to plant in these woods. Cesar introduced me to his viticulturist and winemaker, Greg Esch, who proceeded to plot out the potential vineyard.

The site is level but rocky, with little topsoil, and deer browsing will always be an issue. My pergola face east, toward a road running parallel, beyond which is the Saw Mill River Valley. To the south and north are trees, and to the west is the house. With minimal tree removal to the east and southeast, about six hours of sunlight exposure could be achieved. While not ideal for grape vines, which thrive in full sun, this amount of sunlight was adequate, and the soil is dry.

Now came the really fun part: the selection of the grape varieties. Esch and I selected vines based both on their interest to a wine lover and for their ability to survive the demanding northeastern winter. These included two *vitis vinifera*—two of the “noble” grape varieties originally imported from Europe: Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Also planted principally around the pergolas because of their vigor were four French hybrid varieties: Seyval Blanc, a white that has produced award-winning wines in New York; Traminette, a white with a



spicy nose reminiscent of Gewürztraminer; Chardone, a white variety sometimes used in sparkling wines; and Noiret, a red said to resemble fuller-bodied Pinot Noir, or Syrah.

In the spring of 2009, we marked row locations, installed beds of compost and planted and staked the vines. A plastic grow tube was placed around each vine to encourage growth and protect it from deer. In all, we planted about 150 vines. As the first season progressed, trellis posts and wire were installed.

The vines thrived. By late summer, shoots emerged from the grow tubes. In early autumn, the grow tubes were removed and the vines trained to the trellis wires. In late fall, we placed straw around the crown of each vine to protect them from winter cold shocks.



The vines survived last winter beautifully. By mid-June, the vines filled the trellises. Vines planted around the pergolas were pruned so as to encourage vertical growth, and in June were in some cases reaching the top of the 10-foot high pergolas! Where once there were buds, we now had fruit.

As a lifelong wine enthusiast, I can't tell you how proud I was of those bead-like grapes. As someone who's toured some of the great vineyards and wineries in the world, I can say that this activity has given me an even deeper appreciation of all the care and skill that goes into grape growing. It's one thing to kick the dirt; it's quite another to turn it over, to plant it, to nurture it.

Of course, we had to remove most of that fruit to encourage the health of the vines. Next year could be the year I become a wine-grower. Stay tuned for my next report from Strum Vineyards.

Cheers!

Editor & Publisher





**WHATEVER THE OCCASION**



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The  
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## LUXE Life

### PETER ISLAND RESORT & SPA, PETER ISLAND, B.V.I.

Peter Island Resort & Spa offers a 2:1 guest/staff ratio, an Ayurvedic seaside spa, five pearl-white beaches and unspoiled landscapes—and it's steeped in pirate lore. If that's not enough to lure you away to paradise, the largest private island in the British Virgin Islands is now cooking up an intimate culinary adventure for 10 couples or 20 individuals at a time. Guests will get up close and personal with Peter Island's talented on-site chef Lisa Sellers while also learning tricks of the trade from a visiting guest chef—culinary artists like TV sustainability guru Christopher Ivens-Brown and corporate executive chef of Norwegian Cruise Lines Jason Drysdale. The program includes private cooking classes in a breathtaking villa called Falcon's Nest, as well as a private boat tour to Paraquita Bay, a working agricultural farm where they will select local ingredients for an evening feast. "We have people coming from all over the world

to attend these events and we want to create an unforgettable experience for them," says Sellers. Prices for the event start at \$575 per person or \$1,150 per couple based on a five-night stay (not including accommodations). *peterisland.com*

—AMY PATUREL

## REDISCOVERING CRAFT SAKÉ

Embracing its roots, regional saké is a growing trend in Japan and beyond.

Historically, saké was by definition a regional product. Crafted with local rice and water according to regionally developed brewing styles, it was intrinsically tied to native tastes and cuisine. In modern times, with no framework of appellations governing saké production and efficient transportation of raw materials, sake is often a product of ingredients from faraway lands and homogenized brewing styles.

Yet breweries that hold steadfast to regional traditions continue to exist today, and as demand for premium jizaké (loosely translated as craft, microbrew or regional saké) increases, brewers and consumers alike are exhibiting renewed interest in the notion of regionality.

As an introduction, here are a few generalizations (from north to south) on notable regional saké styles and recommendations:

**Akita.** Representative of Japan's cold and mountainous Tohoku, or northeast region, Akita brewers often combine their soft, mineral-rich spring waters and abundant rice varieties with a regionally developed yeast strain called AK-1 to create saké that is silky and round with subtle sweetness, gentle acidity and a density of flavor and texture that lingers on the tongue. Try Asamai Shuzo Co. Ama No To Heaven's Door Tokubetsu Junmai (Akita); \$34/720 ml. Imported by Vine Connections. [amanoto.co.jp](http://amanoto.co.jp)

**Niigata.** With its icy, cold winters, copious rains and pristine snowmelt waters, Niigata is a bastion of quality rice and saké. Reminiscent of its native waters, saké from Niigata is often representative of the tanrei style—dry, light and refreshing with elegant and restrained aromatics. Try Echigo Denemon Co., Ltd. Denemon Junmai



Daiginjo (Niigata); \$55/720 ml. Imported by Nishimoto Trading Co., Ltd. [denemon.com](http://denemon.com)

**Hyogo.** The dominant force in premium saké production, Hyogo, and most particularly the coastal Nada area, is blessed with what is considered the best saké brewing water and rice in Japan—mineral rich miyamizu water and yamada nishiki rice. Nada saké is often described as being masculine with flavor profiles that are hearty, structured and savory rather than soft, fruity or floral. Try Sawanotsuru Co., Ltd. Jitsuraku Kimoto Tokubetsu Junmai (Hyogo); \$34/720 ml. Imported by Nishimoto Trading Co., Ltd. [sawanotsuru.co.jp](http://sawanotsuru.co.jp)

—ANNA LEE C. IJIMA

ILLUSTRATION MICHAEL DELAPORTE



# ROSÉ WITH ONE-DISH MEALS

Fresh, fruity and crisp, rosé wines are perfect for breezy warm weather entertaining and al fresco dining, especially when poured with easy-to-prepare, one-dish meals. Here are a few suggestions from top chefs around the country:

Chef Brian Massie likes to pair rosé with a tasty, flavorful beef carpaccio flatbread topped with red onions, basil, and boursin cheese at his Las Vegas eatery, UNION Restaurant and Lounge ([ariolasvegas.com](http://ariolasvegas.com)).

Down south at the Hot & Hot Fish Club in Birmingham, AL. ([hotandhotfishclub.com](http://hotandhotfishclub.com)), Chef Chris Hastings suggests

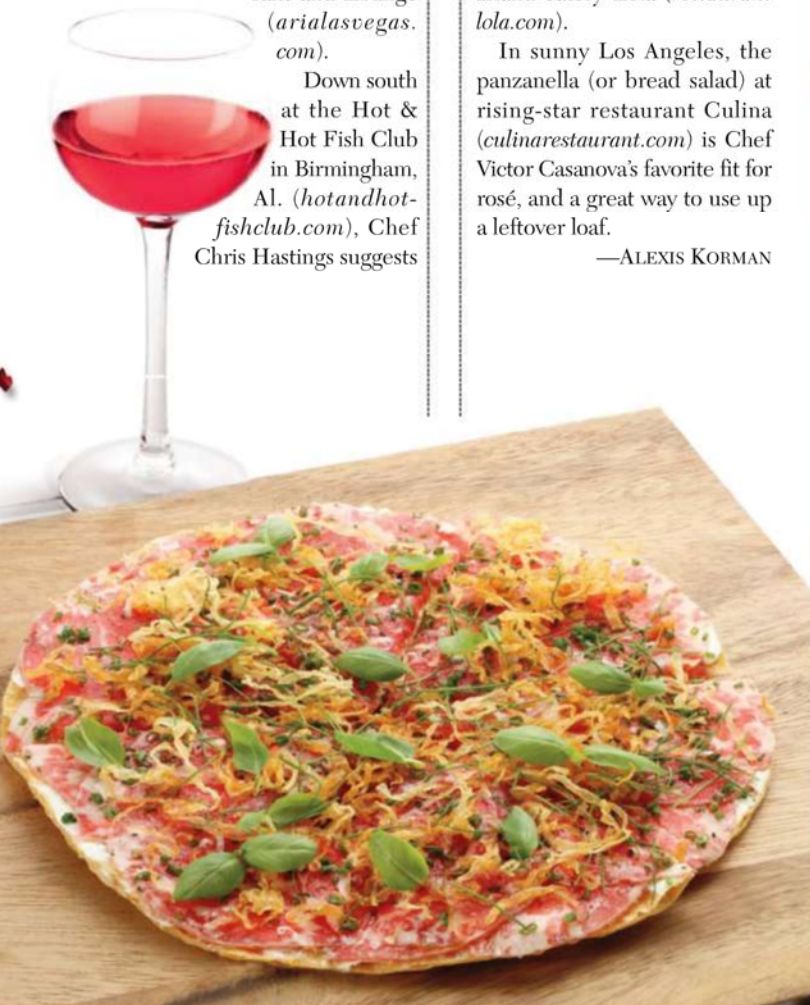
matching a spicy one-pot crawfish boil with a glass of refreshing rosé.

Manhattan eatery Hearth ([restauranthearth.com](http://restauranthearth.com)) is well-known for Chef Marco Canora's simple but elegant down-home dishes, like his saffron lasagna with ricotta, seasonal vegetables and herbs—a winner with rosé.

Chef Michael Ginor's baked (rather than sautéed) jumbo Maryland crab cakes are popular with rosé fans at Long Island eatery Lola ([restaurantlola.com](http://restaurantlola.com)).

In sunny Los Angeles, the panzanella (or bread salad) at rising-star restaurant Culina ([culinarerestaurant.com](http://culinarerestaurant.com)) is Chef Victor Casanova's favorite fit for rosé, and a great way to use up a leftover loaf.

—ALEXIS KORMAN



**More Recipes?** visit [WineMag.com/rosedishes](http://WineMag.com/rosedishes).

## TOP Shelf

Here's a look at this month's top-scoring Cellar Selection, Editors' Choice and Best Buy. For full tasting notes on these and hundreds of other wines, turn to our Buying Guide, which begins on **page 67**.

### Cellar Selection

**96 Stonestreet 2006 Christopher's Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$100.** Hard mountain tannins characterize this Cab, which was grown above 2,000 feet in the Mayacamas. It's hugely deep in blackberries and black currants, with notes of dark chocolate and violets. Meanwhile, 100% new French oak adds an elaborate layer of smoky caramel and char that's entirely in keeping with the wine's volume. Best 2012–2018. —S.H.



### Editors' Choice

**95 J. Bookwalter 2007 Connor Lee Vineyard Conflict (Columbia Valley); \$50.** This is a revelation. The complex and site-specific aromas suggest wild herb, lavender, lemon verbena and black olive. The tannins are supple and ripe, with no green edge at all. The fruit combines mineral-soaked black cherry, sweet raspberry compote and deep cassis. A marvelous wine, dense, detailed and seductive. —P.G.

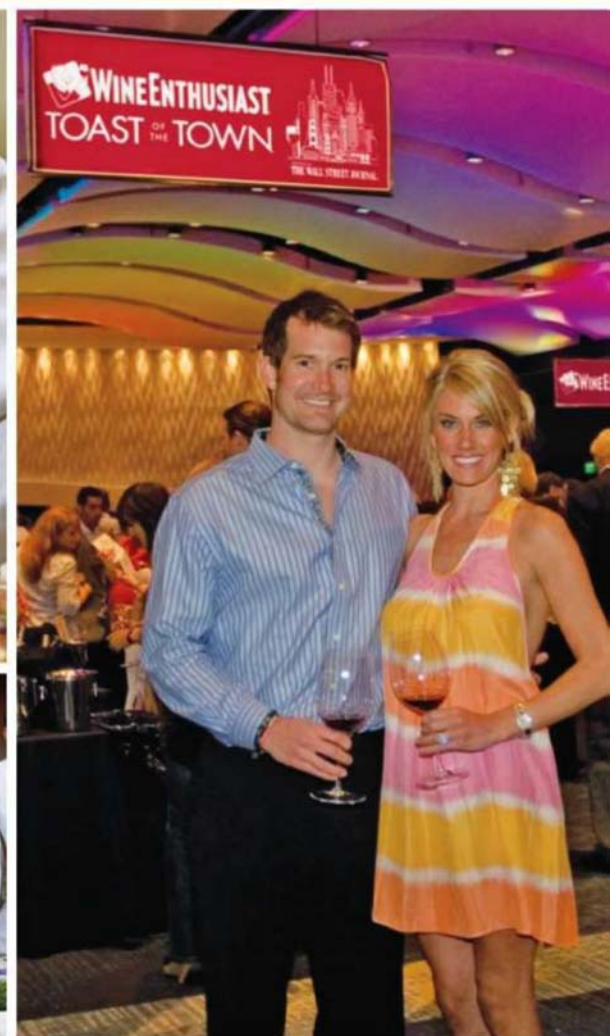


### Best Buy

**91 Casa Lapostolle 2008 Casa Carmenère (Rapel Valley); \$13.** One of the best value-priced, big and rich wines you're likely to find. The nose impresses with potent blackberry, cedar and marzipan aromas, and the palate bridges the gap between power and elegance. Tastes great, with herbal black cherry and cola leading the way. Very ripe but really well made. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.







## TOAST OF THE TOWN 2010

Wine and food lovers throughout the U.S. celebrate fine wine and food at Wine Enthusiast's signature tasting events.

2010 marked the 10th anniversary of Toast of the Town, *Wine Enthusiast's* traveling consumer tasting series. Perennial favorites with wine and food lovers, the events, held this year in New York, San Francisco, Atlanta, Chicago and Washington D.C., featured over 500 wines and spirits from around the world and signature dishes—offered up in tasting portions—from acclaimed local restaurants. Notable wineries pouring this year included Casa Lapostolle, Louis Latour, Cloudy Bay, Rubicon, Yalumba, Domaine Drouhin, Biondi Santi, Clos de Tart and PerryMoore.

The series kicked off on April 8 in Atlanta, where Southern food and wine fans gathered in the Georgia Aquarium's Oceans Ballroom,

whose dramatic lighting, undulating ceilings (designed to simulate the movement of the ocean) and floor-to-ceiling glass fish tanks provided a stunning backdrop for the event.

Moving west, San Francisco's TOTT (April 22) took place, for the fourth consecutive year, inside the elegant War Memorial Opera House. Wineries, many a mere hour from their home base in Napa and/or Sonoma, joined celebrated Northern California restaurants including the girl & the fig, holding court over five floors. The striking Field Museum of Natural History once again hosted the Chicago TOTT on May 6. As per tradition, Sue, the world's largest and most complete *Tyrannosaurus Rex* fossil, kept an eye over the proceedings.

New York City's TOTT unfolded with its usual mixture of glamour and revelry on May 24 inside Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Theater. With the weather holding up, many of the stylish attendees chose to conclude the night on the second floor's scenic balcony overlooking the center's main plaza.

The series ended on a high note on June 11 with the inaugural D.C. event inside the grandiose National Building Museum. District restaurants catered to a sophisticated and international crowd and by evening's end, lively jazz music from the David Bach Quartet prompted spontaneous dancing—an exuberant finale to a successful Toast of the Town season.

—KATHLEEN MCKENNA





PHOTOS MONA BROOKS, DIANNE HUDSON, JOHN VECCHIOLLA, JOHN DREW, KENDALL KARMANIAN, DIANNE HUDSON, JARDA BRYCH



## RANCHO GORDO BEAN SOUP

When autumn advances, many cooks favor filling stews or meat-focused mains for sustenance. But not all stick-to-your-ribs recipes must rely on meat. This rustic, fortifying bean-based soup from Napa Valley's Michelin-rated restaurant/yoga studio Ubuntu (meaning "humanity toward others" in Zulu; [ubuntunapa.com](http://ubuntunapa.com)) proves that flavorful vegetables can make a most satisfying fall meal. Note: While Chef Aaron London incorporates vegetables from the restaurant's own biodynamic garden, the needed ingredients can be found at most organic markets (and yellow eye beans from [ranchogordo.com](http://ranchogordo.com)). —A. K.

Soak beans overnight in plenty of water. In a large pan, sauté the diced carrot, celery, onion, garlic, parsley, rosemary, thyme, lemon peel and chili flakes, coriander and fennel seed in olive oil until just caramelized. Remove from heat and create a sachet with the vegetables and herbs.

Drain water and place beans in large pot. Add cooking water and the sachet.

Bring beans to a boil and skim any foam that rises to the top. Reduce to a gentle simmer and cook until beans are soft and creamy, but not falling apart.

Remove from heat and add 2 tablespoons of salt to taste. (Chef recommends re-tasting beans after 10 minutes for salt and adding more as necessary.)

Discard sachet, cool. In a large pot add ½ cup olive oil and turn onto medium-high heat.

Add carrots, pinch of salt and black pepper and cook carrots until soft and slightly caramelized. Add celery and leeks with a bit of salt and fresh pepper. Once tender, push vegetables to side of the pot and add garlic, chili and rosemary and stir until aromatic.

Stir all ingredients together. Sweat slowly until all of the flavors have combined.

Add tomatoes and allow to caramelize slightly in the pot. Add the beans and cooking liquid and continue until vegetables are tender, at least an hour. Add parsley before serving and adjust with as much salt, pepper and olive oil as you like. Serve with torn toasted rustic bread. *Serves 6–8.*

### For the soup

- 3 cups yellow eye beans
- 4 quarts water
- 1 whole carrot, diced
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 head garlic, split
- Stems from 1 bunch Italian parsley
- 4 sprigs of fresh rosemary
- 4 sprigs of fresh thyme
- Peel of one lemon
- 1 teaspoon chili flakes
- 1 teaspoon coriander
- 1 teaspoon fennel seed
- Salt, fresh ground black pepper and olive oil to taste.

### To finish

- ½ cup olive oil
- 3 large carrots, pinky nail size dice
- 5 stalks celery, same size dice
- 2 leek whites, same dice
- 1 head garlic, cloves microplaned
- 1 tablespoon crushed red chili flake
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 cup canned San Marzano tomatoes, chopped
- ½ cup chopped Italian parsley



**Wine Recommendation:** Balance the hearty, rustic and spicy character of this dish with a big, fruit-forward Zinfandel from California, such as the DeLoach 2007 OFS or Rubicon Edizione Pennino. Or try a balanced, claret-style Petite Sirah such as the Titus 2007 or Concannon 2006 Heritage.



## THE PRACTICAL HEDONIST

Our picks for connoisseurs on a budget.

### You Want:

Dow's 2007 Vintage Port (\$76)

### What About:

W. & J. Graham's Six Grapes Reserve (\$23)



Symington Family Estates is among the largest vineyard owners in the Douro Valley region of Northern Portugal, known for such big-boy Ports as Dow's, Graham's, Smith Woodhouse and Warre's. But they have also been innovators in the production of original Port blends as well as still wines from the region, sourced

from many of the very same vineyards.

First the Vintage Port. As declared vintage Ports are rare—less than 2% of all Port produced—the 2007 vintage Port from Dow's is unsurprisingly a stunner, sourced from Quinta do Bomfim and Quinta da Senhora da Ribeira, vineyards belonging to Dow's since the late 1890s. Touriga Nacional (50% of which is in the final blend) from the vintage is particularly vaunted, with stunning notes of violet and licorice.

For the everyday Port aficionado, there's W. & J. Graham's Six Grapes Reserve, also made by the Symingtons. The wine is sourced from the family's same Douro vineyards, most notably Quinta dos Malvedos, Quinta do Tua and Quinta das Lages, and is a proprietary blend of all six grapes used to make Port, yet still rich and robust, dark red with solid structure and swirls of boysenberry, cherry and plum. The price? Nice.

For more info, visit [dows-port.com](http://dows-port.com).

—VIRGINIE BOONE

## GEEK Speak

### HYBRIDS

Botanically speaking, a hybrid is the offspring or crossing of two different varieties or species of plants. Cross-pollination can occur naturally, though rarely, to create hybrid wine grapes (including the Catawba, Delaware and Isabella grapes, native to Northeast America) but today, most hybrids that are used for winemaking are created artificially. American winemakers started purposefully creating hybrids around the early 19th century, crossing classic, desirable European grapes (*Vitis vinifera*) with hearty American grapes (*Vitis labrusca*) to create vines that could survive cooler, less favorable climates, yet produce flavorful wines. Europeans were less enthusiastic about hybrids, assuming that hybrids, as a mixed breed, made inferior wines (plus France had strict wine-making laws). But when phylloxera hit in the late 19th century, Europeans became more receptive. Now, newer wine regions in France use hybrids more freely, and often the hybrids are named after their creators, such as Francois Baco's Baco Noir.

—CASEY DOOLEY



## Best Buys of the Month

Contributing Editor Michael Schachner's favorite Best Buys for September



As the summer begins to fade, we turn our attention to red wines. And where better to find a treasure trove of affordable, high-quality reds than Chile, one of the world's top sources for well-crafted wines under \$15? This month, contributing editor Michael Schachner offers up 10 of his favorite Best Buys tasted in recent months. As has long been the case, Cabernet Sauvignon from various wine valleys leads the charge, but Schachner also highlights a pair of varietal Carmenères, and an interesting four-grape blend from Colchagua. Salud!

**91 Casa Lapostolle 2008 Casa Carmenère (Rapel Valley); \$13.** One of the best value-priced, big and rich wines you're likely to find. Tastes great, with herbal black cherry and cola flavors. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA.

**89 Emiliana 2009 Natura Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$11.** Dusty berry aromas and a touch of leather and earth make for an attractive bouquet, especially for a wine of this price level. Imported by Banfi Vintners.

**89 Miguel Torres 2008 Las Mulas Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$11.** A really nice bargain-priced Cabernet, which is what Chile excels at. Black fruit with some peppery darkness is what it's all about. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co.

**89 Viña Casablanca 2008 Cefiro Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$10.** A totally correct Cab that brings everything the textbook calls for. The mouthfeel is spot-on and elevated by ripe, toasty berry, chocolate and spice flavors. Imported by Carolina Wine Brands USA.

**88 Santa Alicia 2008 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$9.** Aromas of mocha, chocolate and ripe berry fruit are well molded, and the palate is warm, rich and full of tasty raspberry and plum fruit. Imported by Halby Marketing.

**88 Luis Felipe Edwards 2008 Rosa Blanca Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$12.** Earthy and nice on the nose, with a spot of rubber. Light to medium as Cabs go, with spice and verve to the finish. Imported by Admiral Imports.

**88 Odjell 2008 Armador Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$12.** A pure and proper Cabernet with aromas of balsam wood, toast, berry and cassis. Spicy on the finish, with a bit of piquant heat. Imported by Select Fine Wines.

**88 La Playa 2007 Claret Block Selection (Colchagua Valley); \$11.** The nose has cassis, dry oak and herbal notes, while it tastes of cola and cherry. A blend of Carmenère, Cabernet, Petit Verdot and Syrah. Imported by Cabernet Corporation.

**87 O. Fournier 2008 Urban Cabernet Sauvignon (Maule Valley); \$11.** Floral, fresh and just big enough. There's a bit of everything, including leafiness, red fruit, toast, chocolate and cassis. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain.

**87 MontGras 2009 Reserva Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$12.** Super concentrated, with almost overpowering blackberry and boysenberry fruit. A high-octane red if there ever was one. Imported by Palm Bay International.



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## Q&A WITH Chuck Mansfield

WINEMAKER AT HOP KILN WINERY IN SONOMA, CALIFORNIA

Youthful but savvy, the 25-year-old vintner discusses the Internet's role in wine trends, going organic and the value of knowing when to keep your mouth shut.

**T**wo years ago, at age 23, Chuck Mansfield was named chief winemaker at Sonoma, California's Hop Kiln winery—possibly the youngest American to hold that post outside a family-owned company. Granted, Mansfield had something of head start growing up on a grape and tree fruit farm near Placerville. Still, in many ways this lanky post collegiate, part of the first class to earn a Wine and Viticulture degree from California Polytechnic State University in 2006, is a lot like his Millennial compatriots, a generation that sees the world of wine quite differently from their elders.

**Wine Enthusiast:** What first sparked your interest in wine?

**Chuck Mansfield:** It was a bit of an evolution. I enjoyed working in the vineyards on my dad's ranch, and I was also kind of a chemistry geek. In high school I began to see that winemaking was a cool intersection of science and art and marketing. When I tasted a bottle of Williams Selyem for the first time, it was such a powerful experience it made me want to hone my skills so that someday I too could make something that beautiful.

**WE:** Why do you think Hop Kiln hired you instead of someone with more experience?

**CM:** Being young comes with its own advantages. Sure there's inexperience, but I've come out of school with a fresh perspective. I'm also good at knowing when something is too big for me: I know what I know and I know what I don't know. When I meet a more experienced winemaker I listen first, ask questions, listen again, and don't talk until I've learned what I can. One of the things I really enjoy about Russian River is the sense of community where everybody shares ideas up and down the street, and I have a very good network of people—former mentors, neighbors like Bob Cabral of Williams Selyem who are only a phone call away.

**WE:** What innovations are you bringing to Hop Kiln that you think an older, more traditional winemaker might resist?

**CM:** We've invested in the Pellenc, a mechanical harvester which I think is ideal for our Pinot Noirs: it's very efficient; it lets us pick individual areas of our vineyard and it gives me a cleaner, colder product.



I THINK MILLENNIALS ARE MUCH MORE DARING, MORE EXPERIMENTAL. MY PARENTS' GENERATION TENDS TO FALL IN LOVE WITH A LABEL OR A VARIETAL OR A REGION, WHILE MY FRIENDS HAVE A THIRST TO FIND THE NEXT BIG THING.

I think some people get comfortable with a program and they're afraid to try innovations. If you read the history of wine you see that at one time people were worried about things like de-stemming and crushing.

**WE:** How does the wine drinking attitude of Millennials differ from that of older generations?

**CM:** I think Millennials are much more daring, more experimental. My parents' generation tends to fall in love with a label or a varietal or a region, while my friends have a thirst to find the next big thing. It's a lot like people used to view beer, trying new microbrews, or indie music, looking for the next big band.

**WE:** How do you think the Internet influences Gen Y?

**CM:** The Internet is a two-way conversation that you don't have in print and broadcast media. People feel they can speak freely and honestly, especially when they think they're not going to hurt anybody's feelings. The feedback I find on Facebook posts, in Tweets, even on random blogs, whether it's positive or negative, is invaluable in being able to dial in to what we do here.

**WE:** Which varieties do you think are overlooked or underrated?

**CM:** I think there are some tremendous values in Rhônes. There hasn't been a movie like *Sideways* to help popularize them and sometimes the names are hard to pronounce, but I think there are a lot of sleeper varietals and blends.

**WE:** What changes would you like to see in the wine industry?

**CM:** I'd like to see people being a good steward of the environment. Quite a few changes are already taking place: there's a move toward sustainable farming, biodynamics and organics, even among people who are not necessarily going for the organic or biodynamic tag. At Hop Kiln for instance, we really look at our diesel usage, at limiting herbicides and at erosion control. The U.S. wine industry is still relatively young when you compare it to Europe, but I feel that in this short amount of time California has made progress in leaps and bounds. You have to be self-limiting if you want the industry to continue. You have to take care of the soil, because that's where everything starts.

—JANET FORMAN





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# NAPA AUCTION 2010

America's storied wine auction regains former glory with an \$8.51 million haul.



Top row: Janet Viader, Tim Mondavi, Carissa Mondavi; Dalia Ceja, Amelia Ceja; Gina Gallo, Jean Charles Boisset; Jayson Woodbridge, David Bigger. Middle row: Fritz Hatton, Annika Sorenstam; Junichi Ishida; Eric Stonestreet and friend; the Fund a Need kids. Bottom row: Bill Harlan, Susan Kostrzewa; Delia Viader and friends; Alexandria O'Gorman and Robin Quivers; The Bangles.

The take-home buzz from June's Auction Napa Valley was that "it's back." After last year's disappointing take—\$5.7 million at the recession's height—sales brought in \$8.51 million. That was short of the all-time record haul, \$10.5 million in 2005, but nearly 50% more than sales in 2009.

The highest bid, "Fund a Need," was somewhat unusual for a charity wine auction. It called for people to bid cash for no prize at all, except the knowledge that their money would go to children's health and welfare programs in Napa County, including immunizations, literacy and mentoring programs, and protection from abuse. It raised over \$1 million. That was closely

followed by eight magnums of Colgin wines, together with wine dinners, divided among four bidders, each of whom pledged \$250,000. Other top lots included wines from Harlan Estate, Beringer, Shafer, Dalla Valle, Screaming Eagle and Spottswoode. Longtime charity wine auctioneers Fritz Hatton and David Reynolds helmed the Napa event.

The auction was held, as it has been for 30 years, at Meadowood Resort, in St. Helena. The Saturday before featured the Taste Napa Valley and Barrel Auction, which was conducted for the first time in the caves of Rubicon Estate. Together, the two events raised the \$8.51 million.

—STEVE HEIMOFF

PHOTOS VICTORIA YEE





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involves guaranteeing the utmost transparency as regards the production and sale of Chianti, safeguarding 2,500 producers and their 15,000 hectares of vines and tracking the official tests and organoleptic controls required under Guaranteed Denomination of Origin status. We are dedicated to nurturing not only our region, but its great history too.

The Chianti Wine Consortium [www.consorziovinochianti.it](http://www.consorziovinochianti.it)



# BACK TO THE BASICS WITH SALADE NIÇOISE

Why going old school with this famous recipe is the right route.

**A**nyone who likes food controversy *loves* Salade Niçoise. This simple, irresistible summer salad from Nice, France has been fomenting heated discussion for decades. What is the real Salade Niçoise, gourmands are always asking—and then usually sniffing and snipping at the answers that come back.

For example, Waverly Root, the great mid-20th century chronicler of French cuisine, tells us that Salade Niçoise must *never* contain anything cooked, then backs off a bit by admitting that the Niçoise themselves occasionally include hard-boiled egg. I always do and love it.

He tells us that tomatoes must be quartered in a Salade Niçoise, otherwise it's not a Salade Niçoise. Rest in peace, Waverly, but late last summer, after taking in a joyous screening of *Julie & Julia*, my daughters and I purchased amazing cherry tomatoes at a farmers' market, halved them—can you imagine?—and included them in a glorious version of what we firmly believed was a Salade Niçoise.

Pat Wells, American ex-pat to France and wonderful culinary author, retells the old taboo against including lettuce in a Salade Niçoise and

then proceeds to offer a recipe from a great restaurant in Cannes that includes greens. You go, girl; greens don't interfere, it seems to me, with the essential spirit of the dish: a fresh-as-blazes summertime salad mingling Provençal vegetables and canned fish.

The canned fish is the one traditional variable that no classic author shrinks from. You may have anchovies in the dressing, you may have anchovies on top, but you must have canned tuna. And here's where the liberal in me does a Limbaugh: without canned tuna, I do not believe it's truly Salade Niçoise.

I know that if you walk into a trendy bistro from New York to San Francisco and order a Salade Niçoise the odds are enormous you'll be getting a slab of "sushi-grade tuna" seared on the outside, somewhat raw on the inside. And you'll find delight in the eyes of the bistro denizens that they have once again evaded a brush with canned seafood—despite the fact that it defines the dish.

Why do they recoil from the real thing?

1. There is a calumny in our heads against the magnificence of tinned seafood. In France, in Italy, in Spain, it is worshipped. High-quality tinned seafood gets vintage dating in France, and high prices everywhere. As a culture, we just don't get it. I would love to see more relaxation with, and acceptance of, the specialties that Europeans have worshipped for centuries.

2. Some part of the collective reptilian brain is telling us that canned

YOU MAY HAVE ANCHOVIES IN THE DRESSING, YOU MAY HAVE ANCHOVIES ON TOP, BUT YOU MUST HAVE CANNED TUNA. AND HERE'S WHERE THE LIBERAL IN ME DOES A LIMBAUGH: WITHOUT CANNED TUNA, I DO NOT BELIEVE IT'S TRULY SALADE NIÇOISE.

fish has (gasp) *fat*! That it has *calories*! That it has *oil*! Never mind that it's olive oil, which is dazzlingly healthy; we'd rather stick to our uninformed guns than give the real thing a chance. We crouch under the tomatoes, hoping the big, bad, mono-unsaturated fat will go away. "What some call health, if purchased by perpetual anxiety about diet," as George Dennison Prentice, famed 19th century journalist, once noted "isn't much better than tedious disease."

Get yourself a tin of Spanish Ventresca (belly tuna), preserved in olive oil. Place it alongside some good cherry tomatoes, some cooked and cooled string beans, some cooked and cooled potatoes. Throw on a hard-boiled egg, if you like. Make a garlicky dressing with more olive oil, a little sharp vinegar, some mashed anchovies and raw garlic. Whisk, drizzle, toss (if desired). Eat slowly, and leave some over if you must—but in preparing this dish traditionally, you will finally understand why this dish was created, and why some of life's good things should never change.



PHOTO ROBYN MACKENZIE/SHUTTERSTOCK



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## Ann Arbor

This vibrant Michigan college town offers wine and food fit for ambitious gourmets.

Most college towns are assumed to have good beer, but in Ann Arbor, foodies will discover there's much more than a good microbrew on the table. Fans of the college's storied University of Michigan football team who flock here in the autumn will also find a thriving farm-to-table food and wine culture.

At the year-old **Grange Kitchen & Bar** (118 W. Liberty; [grangekitchenandbar.com](http://grangekitchenandbar.com)), chef/owner Brandon Johns—who sports a pig tattoo on his forearm—sources meat, dairy and vegetables from local farms. Sunday brunch offers items like fried whitefish sandwiches and house-cured meats (ham, breakfast sausage and charcuterie platters).

Located across from the year-round, indoor **Kerrytown Farmers' Market** (315 Detroit Street; [Kerrytown.org](http://Kerrytown.org)), which has been going strong for 90 years and has 150 vendors, former Top Chef contestant Eve Aronff has designed a seasonally inspired menu at her French-style restaurant, **Eve** (415 N. Fifth Avenue; [evetherestaurant.com](http://evetherestaurant.com)). Conclude a meal of Thai chicken (from an Indiana farm) or lamb rolled in brik pastry with Parisian-inspired desserts like violet or coffee macaroons.

At **Zingerman's Delicatessen** (422 Detroit Street; [zingermans.com](http://zingermans.com)), sample cheeses, oils, syrups, chocolates and salts in the marketplace—then sit down with cappuccino (containing milk from a local dairy and Zingerman's own roasted beans) and a breakfast sandwich containing well-sourced ingredients like Arkansas peppered ham in Broadbent Kentucky gravy, or Michigan maple syrup drizzled over challah French toast.

Zingerman's sister business, the **Roadhouse** (2501 Jackson Ave.; [zingermansroadhouse.com](http://zingermansroadhouse.com)), offers Americana cuisine harvested from Chef Alex Young's Corman Farms, such as heirloom corn or sustainably raised hogs. Wow your dinner guests by learning to whip up flatbreads or baguettes at **Zingerman's Bakehouse** (3711 Plaza Drive; [zingermansbakehouse.com](http://zingermansbakehouse.com)).

Global cuisine is not new to Ann Arbor. During the mid-90s John Roumanis opened **Mediterraneo** (2900 S. State Street; [mediterraneo.com](http://mediterraneo.com)), serving dishes that capture North Africa, Italy, Greece, Spain, Turkey and France.

The olive oil is imported from his hometown in Greece. Since 1984, **Paesano Restaurant & Wine Bar** (3411 Washtenaw Ave.; [paesanosannarbor.com](http://paesanosannarbor.com)), has expressed affection for Italy through its extensive all-Italian wine list and regional-focused menus. Chef Isabella Nicoletti, a native of Trissino, Italy, weaves specialties like Sardinia's squid-ink spaghetti with crudo del Chianti that contains locally grown beef.

The wine scene is just as vibrant. Father-daughter team John and Kristin Jonna (who formerly worked for Benziger Winery) opened **Vinology Wine Bar and Restaurant** (110 S. Main Street; [vinowinebars.com](http://vinowinebars.com)), in downtown Ann Arbor during 2006. Pair seasonally inspired small plates with an impressive wine list that includes 38 wines by the glass. Don't miss the "bubble room" downstairs—an intimate space with 400 hand-blown glass balls suspended from the ceiling; it's next to a retail wine shop.

Another wine bar, **La Dolce Vita**, on the basement level of **Gratzi Ristorante** (326 S. Main Street; [gratzirestaurant.com](http://gratzirestaurant.com)), is the best place in town to go for a cigar and a glass of wine—both indulgences feature lots of variety in a cozy ambiance. Lunch earlier in the day at Gratzi might include porcini-filled pasta bundles or a Kobe burger.

And what would a university town be without microbreweries? In 1995 Rene and Matt Grieff opened **Arbor Brewing Company Pub & Eatery** (114 E. Washington Street; [arborbrewing.com](http://arborbrewing.com)). Always evolving, their latest mantra is to buy from local, sustainable producers to build items like stone-grilled pizzas and corned beef sandwiches. Drop in for a pint of light (Brasserie Blonde) or dark beer (Espresso Love Breakfast Stout). Much of the food at **Jolly Pumpkin Café & Brewery** (311 S. Main Street; [jollypumpkin.com](http://jollypumpkin.com)), comes from local farmers markets. Pair the brewery's artisan ales with tempura-battered vegetables, a beer-friendly cheese board and market salads. In suburban Milan, **Original Gravity Brewing Company** (440 County Street; [ogbrewing.com](http://ogbrewing.com)), has about 15 beers on tap, ranging from an eclectic 440 Pepper Smoker (German smoked malt and jalapeños) to a Pale Ale.

—KRISTINE HANSEN



Top to bottom: housed in a historic building in downtown Ann Arbor, the quaint Arbor Brewing Company offers sustainable dishes that pair well with unique microbrews; farm-fresh scallion relish, smoked chile sauce and kimchi from Grange Kitchen & Bar; run by a father-daughter team, Vinology Wine Bar & Restaurant is a bi-level space that draws buzz.

PHOTO CENTER LISA MONAHAN





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## SPiRiT | Realm

Exploring trends in cocktails, spirits and the stars behind the bar.

### MARK 46

For a half-century, Kentucky Bourbon icon Maker's Mark has kept a pretty steady profile. The whisky was wheated, the wax seal was red, and the distillery only made one thing. No more. Starting in July, the historic Kentucky Bourbon maker will extend their line by 100%—to a whopping two products. The new bottling, called Maker's 46, doesn't stray far from the original formula, but for the injection of 12 seared staves of French Limousine oak into the barrel during the last four months of aging. The zesty, rye-like result is an exciting addition to any home bar. —ROBERT SIMONSON



### HUM LIQUEUR Sweet, Spicy and Sassy

Chicago bar chef and sommelier Adam Seger and London mixologist Joe McCanta spent nearly two years perfecting the recipe for Hum Liqueur, inspired by the great amaros of Italy. The end result: a red-tinted, hibiscus-spiked rum (hence the name, "hum,"), spicy and sweet with herbs and spices like ginger, whole cardamom, cinnamon bark and kaffir lime.

The organic rum used in the launch is a 100-proof small batch distilled by North Shore Distillery; future bottlings will use a South American cane sugar rum. The rum is then infused with a proprietary syrup made with fair trade syrup, bringing the alcohol content to 70 proof. The spirit is being promoted as a sassy substitute for sweet vermouth or orange liqueur to kick up a classic Negroni, Manhattan or margarita.

—KARA NEWMAN



### GUEST BARTENDERS MIX IT UP

Within a 48-hour period last March, Angelinos had the chance to sip the handcrafted cocktails of nine of the most talented bartenders in the U.S. and England. Thanks to The Edison ([edisondowntown.com](http://edisondowntown.com)) and First & Hope's ([firstandhope.com](http://firstandhope.com)) group guest bartender events—called Radio Room and Red Rover, Red Rover, respectively—Los Angeles is home to two of the finest drinking nights in the country. Every month.

The venues attract marquee talent, thanks in part to liquor sponsors, who cover bartenders' hotels and airfare, and "treat them like rock stars," says Marcos Tello of Tello/Demarest, the consulting firm that launched both events. Proving the bartenders' star status, cocktailians line up like Bourbon-besotted groupies to sample signature sips from the likes of Erick Castro (of Rickhouse in San Francisco) and Brian Miller (formerly of Death & Company in New York).

Customers might revel in the novelty of trying new cocktails, but it's possible the visiting bartenders are the ones having the best time. Castro sees the events as a way for bartenders to share information about syrups, infusions and techniques. "It's a great way to spread knowledge really quickly. There hasn't been one time we haven't learned from each other." Miller agrees. "It's not about who is better, it's about getting better." —LILLY KUWASHIMA



PHOTOS TOP: RIGHT LEO RIVAS; DANNY MILLER/DANNYMILLERPHOTO.COM; CAROLINE PARDILLA/CAROLINEONCRACK.COM

### WEED PATROL Go to the garden for your next cocktail.

Arugula, dandelion and other fresh-from-the-greenmarket finds may not be your first choice for at-home cocktails, but celebrated mixologist Charlotte Voisey advocates their use. "Don't be afraid of incorporating lesser-known herbs and leaves into your drinks," Voisey says. Like commonly used mint in the classic mojito, other greens "can add a fresh, aromatic accent. Just don't over-muddle them because you'll discover their bitter and sometimes powerful flavor." Fresh fruits like watermelon, strawberry and rhubarb pair particularly well with seasonal greenery (including artichoke and basil) over a gin or vodka base, adding a refreshing note of sweetness to these herbaceous creations. For easy-to-make cocktail recipes from Voisey, visit [WineMag.com/gardencocktails](http://WineMag.com/gardencocktails)

—ALEXIS KORMAN





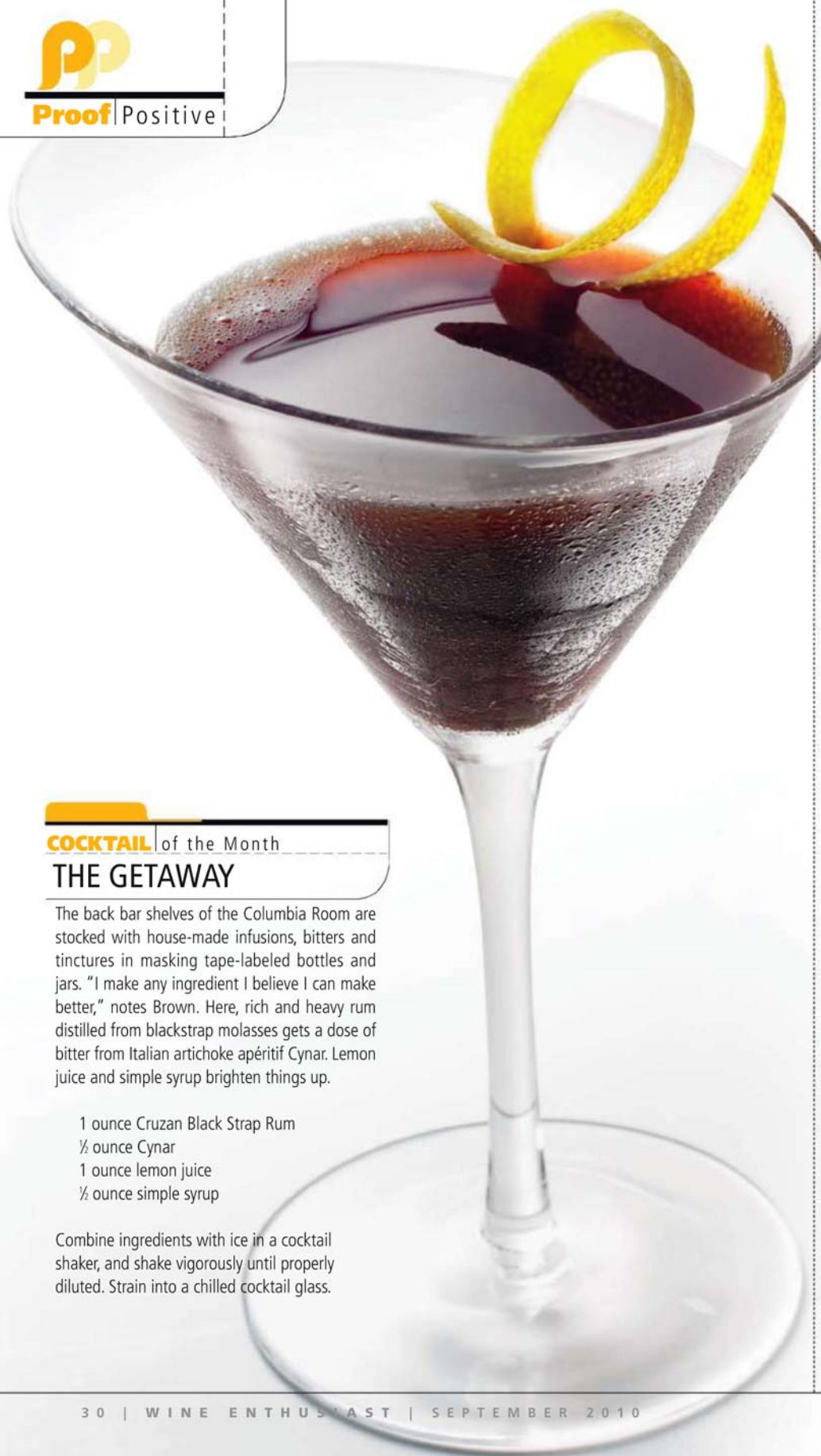
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**COCKTAIL** of the Month

**THE GETAWAY**

The back bar shelves of the Columbia Room are stocked with house-made infusions, bitters and tinctures in masking tape-labeled bottles and jars. "I make any ingredient I believe I can make better," notes Brown. Here, rich and heavy rum distilled from blackstrap molasses gets a dose of bitter from Italian artichoke apéritif Cynar. Lemon juice and simple syrup brighten things up.

- 1 ounce Cruzan Black Strap Rum
- ½ ounce Cynar
- 1 ounce lemon juice
- ½ ounce simple syrup

Combine ingredients with ice in a cocktail shaker, and shake vigorously until properly diluted. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass.



**MIXOLOGIST  
OF THE MONTH**

**Derek  
Brown**

Co-Owner, The Passenger/  
Columbia Room, Washington, D.C.

As the sommelier at several Washington, D.C. restaurants including renowned Mediterranean hotspot Komi, the talented Derek Brown garnered a flurry of local and national accolades. But a few years ago he traded in the corkscrew for the cocktail shaker. "Bartenders are as American as apple pie, yet draw in traditions of shamans and alchemists," explains Brown. "We are given more license, more creativity and allowed a more approachable demeanor." Today Brown co-owns The Passenger and Columbia Room ([passengerdc.com](http://passengerdc.com)), a buzzworthy duo of downtown bars in the District.

Older brother Tom creates cocktails on the fly at The Passenger, while Derek heads up The Columbia Room. The latter is equal parts cocktail den and laboratory, heavily influenced by the Japanese concept of omikase, an "as you like it" approach that ultimately leaves your experience in the hands of the chef (or in this case, mixologist).

When he's not working behind the bar or interacting with customers, Brown does cocktail education and consulting for his company Better Drinking ([better-drinking.com](http://better-drinking.com)). He's also on the board of directors for the Museum of the American Cocktail, mixology chair for Taste of the Nation D.C. and a proud charter member of the D.C. Craft Bartenders Guild.

Though some modern libations can be amazingly multi-layered and complex to create, Brown is adept at breaking it down. "The cocktail itself is as perfect as Haiku," he notes. "It's so simple: spirits, sugar, bitters and water. Yet it can appear in infinite combinations." His ultimate goal is to make people happy, and cites a perfectly made cocktail as a wonderful tool to do just that. —KELLY MAGYARICS

PHOTO LEFT JON VAN GORDER



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2009 Brut Nature, "Year's Best Values," Wine & Spirits Magazine, August 2009  
2008 Brut N/V "100 Best Buys of the Year," Wine Enthusiast, December 2008  
2007 Cristalino Rose Brut, "Best Sparkler of 2007," Bride's Magazine  
"Value Brand of the Year" Three Consecutive Years, Wine & Spirits Magazine



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## ARE MILLENNIALS THE ANSWER?

The spirit is willing but the dollar is weak—Americans love wine and are savvy about it, but their ability to pony up for premium wines in the future is uncertain.

**I**n our May issue, *Wine Enthusiast* Editor & Publisher Adam Strum wondered if the wine industry can sustain “the new normal;” consumers have traded down in the amount of money they spend on wine. And there’s no end in sight.

You hear it everywhere. The luxury tier has been battered, and so has everything over \$15, or whatever the price point is where consumers shudder. Strum, ever the optimist, expressed confidence that the American wine industry will experience a “rebalance” and “will continue to thrive.”

“One consistent bright spot is...the Millennial segment,” Strum noted. That’s because most of this 70 million-strong cohort are at the peak of their independence, without families (yet), and with disposable income that, often as not, goes to wine, beer or a cocktail. True, their generation has also been hit by the recession. Some 37% are currently out of work. But they have proven to be serious consumers; once the economy improves, it is believed, the hundreds of billions of dollars of spending power commanded by Millennials will be a bracing tonic to the wine industry.

Through my blog, I’ve gotten deeply involved with Millennials and the social networking conversation. So I want to focus on what exactly is the promise that Millennials give to the wine industry, and whether that promise can be fulfilled.

The promise, obviously, is sheer numbers. Seventy million is gigantic, and even though all of them aren’t wine drinkers, enough are to theoretically sustain the industry for decades. The Millennials are in search of new experiences, looking for information, which gives individual wineries the opportunity to brand themselves and capture Millennial hearts.

I had tea recently with Leah Hennessy (herself a Millennial), who runs Wine Tasting for Los Angeles (WTFLA) and Millennial Wine Sales, which advises wineries on how to market to Millennials.

Our discussion ranged over the landscape: why wineries should use social networking, how Millennials make buying decisions, how the magic of branding occurs, whether social media can help a winery sell wine, and what happens as digital networks transform the way we engage with each other.

Obviously, this requires lots of crystal gazing. We’re trying to predict the future of massive trends, something nobody is very good at, not even “experts.” So it was not surprising that Hennessy and I would disagree on some crucial points. She’s convinced that wineries

that survive in a Darwinian future will be those most adept at using social media, while I see social media as only one element in a winery’s struggle for existence.

Let’s take the 4,000 winery brands in California. Many, maybe most of them, are trying hard to figure out social media, and they’re succeeding. But there are certain stubborn facts that have to be faced. Trillions of dollars in asset value have been wiped out by the recession, and that money isn’t going to reappear for many years. In the meanwhile, “the new normal”—the fact that people are spending less per bottle—means that most wineries are going to have to figure out how to survive with less money coming in. The Two-Buck Chucks won’t, of course; this recession has been good to them. But most wineries can’t sell their wine at those prices.

This means that the vast majority of California wineries face a problematic future, whether they’re playing with social media or not. One prediction Hennessy made is that wineries will survive by building networks of club members through social media. But does anyone really think 4,000 wineries in California alone are going to sell everything through clubs? Moreover, the distribution system isn’t going away anytime soon, and since it favors large wine companies, the little guys, who account numerically for a huge percentage of wineries, will continue to find it hard to get into the pipeline. And don’t expect universal direct-to-consumer shipping anytime soon. The political pressures against it are just too strong.

I began this column by asking whether the promise of 70 million Millennials for the wine industry can be fulfilled. The answer depends on what kind of economic future they’ll have. If they experience the kind of disposable income the Baby Boomers did, the wine industry will be just fine. They’ll eventually reach the point where a \$20 or \$25 bottle becomes the new \$8, and \$45 or \$50 isn’t out of line for a special dinner.

But every long-term economic forecast I’ve seen suggests that America’s economy is not going to return to its robust heights for a long time. That suggests that the Millennials aren’t going to have a lot of disposable income, especially as they start having kids and saving for college and retirement. So while I hope Adam Strum’s optimism for a thriving rebalance happens, I’m also more pessimistic than he is.

Our culture uses the word “new” in the most flip and slick way—the “new this” and the “new that” always implying that another change is just around the corner. With the wine world’s new normal, I don’t think so. **WE**



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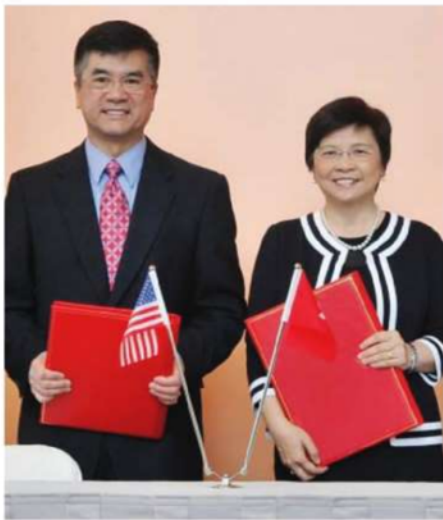
# HONG KONG: A WINE TRA

A new series of agreements between the U.S. and Hong Kong have opened markets — and opened doors to American wine companies.

*An overnight boom in wine trade occurred in February 2008, when Hong Kong eliminated the wine duties. Merchants are seizing the opportunity to increase shipments and establish a greater presence in Hong Kong. Companies from various sectors of the wine industry are seeking to uncork the huge potential market in Asia and particularly Mainland China – a region on the verge of becoming the driver of global wine sales in the next decade and beyond.*

## Memo of Understanding on wine marks closer bilateral ties

A Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation in Wine-related Businesses (MOU) was signed between Hong Kong and the United States on May 17, 2010. This will further foster joint efforts by the United States and Hong Kong to promote U.S. wines in Hong Kong and via Hong Kong into the massive Mainland China market.



Hong Kong Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs. Rita Lau (right) and Secretary of Commerce of the United States, Mr. Gary Locke after the signing of the MOU in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs. Rita Lau, signed the MOU with visiting Secretary of Commerce of the United States, Mr. Gary Locke. "Today, our relationship with the U.S. takes another major step forward," Mrs. Lau commented. "We will strengthen our joint efforts on promoting wine-related trading, tourism, investment and education. The MOU also covers a number of special areas. These include promoting wine alongside regional and local cuisine, facilitating the organization of wine auctions in Hong Kong for U.S. wines, and encouraging the provision of quality wine storage facilities in Hong Kong."

Following this MOU, another co-operation agreement was signed between Hong Kong and Oregon and Washington states on May 24, 2010.

Wine imports from the U.S. amounted to US\$49 million in 2009-2010, representing a five-fold increase since Hong Kong's duty exemption.

## Exciting developments and opportunities

Overall, the market has been responding positively since the wine duty exemption.



Top: The cellar, which was originally built by the British military to store ammunition, is ideal for wine storage. Above: A wine auction in Hong Kong. Hong Kong surpassed London to become the world's second largest wine auction center in 2009, just next to New York.

Wine imports into Hong Kong in 2008-09 amounted to US\$410 million, representing a growth of 80% over 2007-08. The imports grew by another 45% in 2009-10, amounting to US\$595 million. Sixty percent of all wine consumed in Asia is consumed in Hong Kong and Mainland China.

And many prominent U.S. collectors are now looking east when it comes to consigning their cellars. As of the end of June 2010, 30 auctions have been held in Hong Kong since February 2008, with aggregate sales exceeding US\$158 million.



# DING AND DISTRIBUTION HUB



Hong Kong is a center of wine fairs to promote the trade. The Hong Kong Trade Development Council organized its second Hong Kong International Wine and Spirits Fair in 2009, featuring 525 exhibitors from 34 countries and regions, attracting close to 12,000 trade buyers. The fair's third edition will be held from November 4-6, 2010, at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center, and success is virtually assured.

Hong Kong is also gearing up for its second Wine and Dine Festival this year at the West Kowloon promenade, highlighting Hong Kong's diverse culinary culture and showcasing the city as a premier destination for



"Zero wine duty, a simple regulatory regime for wines, and other strong fundamentals including a sound financial system, strong connectivity and the rule of law, make us an ideal place for companies to set up or expand their base," said Hong Kong Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs. Rita Lau.

## Hong Kong: Asia's world city—an ideal place for wine-related businesses

**Hong Kong has removed all wine duties** since February 2008. With no VAT or GST, Hong Kong is the first free wine port among major economies.

### Enhanced customs facilitation measures for wine entering the Mainland China market through Hong Kong\*

- A)** Pre-valuation of wine duty: registered wine traders may request Shenzhen Customs to conduct wine duty valuation before the shipment is exported from Hong Kong to the Mainland. Shenzhen customs will normally complete the procedure within one working day when the shipment arrives; and
- B)** Expedited customs clearance: If no pre-valuation has been conducted, Shenzhen Customs will expedite the clearance process, from three working days to seven depending on whether the wine is new to the Mainland market. If customs clearance cannot be completed within the said timeframe, the Mainland importers may request for release of goods upon payment of guarantee deposit.

\*A Registration Arrangement was launched in May this year for Hong Kong Wine Exporters to make use of the above customs facilitation measures at Shenzhen ports. Details can be found on [www.tid.gov.hk](http://www.tid.gov.hk). After trying out the measures for six to nine months, the situation will be reviewed and extending the scheme by phases to other major Mainland ports such as Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing may be considered.

visitors to enjoy fine wine and food. The festival will be held from October 28-31, with up to 80,000 people expected to attend.

## State-of-the-art storage and vigorous enforcement of counterfeits

Reliable storage facilities to ensure the quality of the wine as an investment stock is now a reality in Hong Kong. In 2009, the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency launched a plan for accrediting storage facilities which meet certain required standards. Nine companies were awarded certifications in May, and more will follow.

Hong Kong Customs is constantly vigilant against possible counterfeiting activities. To help prevent the entry of counterfeit wine into Hong Kong, Customs officers carry out

continuous risk assessments and, as necessary, inspections of wine imports at control points.

## The Door is Open

Strategically located at the heart of Asia, Hong Kong has built a reputation as a regional business hub, a natural gateway to new economic opportunities in Mainland China and the rest of Asia. Her first-rate infrastructure, freedom of expression and commitment to the rule of law are the envy of the world.

Hong Kong's global connectivity provides a strong base for the development of wine-related businesses.

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Economic & Trade Office  
San Francisco



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[hketosf@hketosf.gov.hk](mailto:hketosf@hketosf.gov.hk)

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# Barbera & Dolcetto

## Affordable Italy

These quintessential food wines star in a region of the world with an affection, even reverence, for the marriage of dining and the vine.

BY MONICA LARNER











Grab a table at any informal trattoria or family-run osteria at the heart of the Langhe, the gracefully hilly area that includes the towns of Barolo and Barbaresco in northern Italy, and chances are you won't be served the noble reds that have made this Italy's most celebrated wine territory. Chances are, you'll be served Barbera or Dolcetto.

If Barolo and Barbaresco, two expensive, compelling and elegant wines made from the Nebbiolo grape and carefully cellar-aged for long periods, are the wine equivalent of Piedmont's Sunday best (dress slacks, cufflinks and formal jacket), Barbera and Dolcetto are its favorite used jeans and comfy sweater. There are many reasons why these bright, fruit-forward red wines enjoy a special, intuitive connection to the people who drink them. Here are three: they offer an affordable alternative to the pricier bottles of Northern Italy; they come from a long and storied tradition that makes them two of the most distinctive indigenous expressions produced; and they exhibit natural characteristics that make them quintessential food pairing wines—cultivated in a part of the world that dedicates particular affections to its foods.

"BARBERA IS OUR  
EVERYDAY FOOD WINE  
THANKS TO THE HIGH  
ACIDITY THAT CLEANS  
THE PALATE,"  
SAYS MICHELE  
CHIARLO.



Barbera and Dolcetto (whose name means "little sweet one") exhibit enormous versatility in winemaking styles and trends stemming from the

"Barbera is our everyday food wine thanks to the high acidity that cleans the palate," says Michele Chiarlo, whose Barbera Le Orme is a market leader in the United States "Dolcetto has sweet fruit and more tannins that refresh the mouth."

"These are the wines we grew up with," says Raffaella Bologna. "They accompany all our family moments, anniversaries and celebrations as ever-present bottles standing on the kitchen table." Bologna is seated at a corner table by a large window streaming sunlight at her uncle's Trattoria i Bologna in Rocchetta Tanaro in the province of Asti. Her late father, Giacomo Bologna of the Braidia estate, is credited with inventing modern Barbera when he became one of the first to age the wine in oak barrique in 1982.

In front of her are a bottle of Barbera Bricco dell'Uccellone, the wine that made her father famous, and a plate of agnolotti (square-shaped pasta filled with rabbit, veal and pork) that keeps uncle Beppe famous.

But let's resist the seductive charms of an Italian trattoria for now. What role can these wines play on American tables?

## PRODUCER PICKS

BY VALERIO BORGIANELLI SPINA

What do the Piemontesi suggest you pair with Barbera and Dolcetto? We asked six wine producers, each with his or her link to the food world either through a restaurant or agriturismo, to pair their wine with their favorite local dish.

**Producer:** Accornero ([accornerovini.it](http://accornerovini.it))

**Wine:** Accornero 2008 Giulina Barbera del Monferrato (50% aged in oak tonneaux and the rest in stainless steel for six-eight months)

**Dish:** Tajarin (thin tagliolini-like pasta) with ragù made with sausage from Bra.

"Barbera is made to express all of its fruit aromas and it is an easy-drinking wine that works with the fatty component in foods, such as the eggs used in the pasta, or the butter and the sausage in the ragù." —Giulio Accornero

**Producer:** Cavallotto ([cavallotto.com](http://cavallotto.com))

**Wine:** Cavallotto 2008 Vigna Scot Dolcetto d'Alba (aged in stainless steel and cement)

**Dish:** Cold cuts, especially aged salami with strong flavors of garlic and black pepper.

"The fresh fruit aromas of Dolcetto aged in stainless steel work with the natural fragrances of the salami.

Our tradition pairs this wine with spicy features such as garlic or pepper, but outside Piedmont the wine is perfect with a classic pizza." —Alfio Cavallotto

**Producer:** Braida di Giacomo Bologna ([braida.it](http://braida.it))

**Wine:** Braida 2007 Bricco dell'Uccellone Barbera d'Asti (aged 15 months in oak casks)

**Dish:** Stinco di vitello di razza piemontese brasato al barbara (Barbera braised veal shank)

"The playful exchange between the wine in the dish and in the glass makes this pairing very interesting. The veal shank spends an entire night marinating in the Barbera and is cooked slowly in a clay pot with herbs and vegetables." —Raffaella Bologna

**Producer:** Villa Sparina, Ristorante La Gallina ([monterotondoresort.com/villasparina](http://monterotondoresort.com/villasparina))

**Wine:** Villa Sparina 2006 Barbera del Monferrato (20% is aged in stainless steel and 80% in barrique for 12 months)

**Dish:** Tortelli di gallina in consommé (chicken tortelli in broth)

"The tortelli are served in deep dishes and steaming broth is added as served in front of the guest. We also add rolled balls of raw veal that cook instantly in the hot broth. This pairing is based on the contrast of the

delicate flavors in the dish and the fruity tones of the Barbera." —Marco Franchi, sommelier

**Producer:** Cascina Corte ([cascinacorte.it](http://cascinacorte.it))

**Wine:** 2008 Cascina Corte Dolcetto di Dogliani (aged in stainless steel)

**Dish:** Acciughe al verde (anchovies in green sauce)

"This dish used ingredients from Piedmont and also from neighboring Liguria, home to Pesto alla Genovese. Anchovies are marinated in water and vinegar and the green sauce is made with parsley, capers and bread. The upfront nature of Dolcetto and its vinous aromas make it the perfect companion." —Sandro Barosi, organic farmer and winemaker

**Producer:** Bondi ([bondivini.it](http://bondivini.it)), La Locanda dell'Olmo

**Wine:** 2008 Bondi D'Uien Dolcetto D'Ovada Superiore (40-year-old vines and the wine is aged in stainless steel for 10 months)

**Dish:** Corzetti (pasta shaped with wood forms) with mushroom and sausage ragù

"This is a traditional dish found in the lower parts of Piedmont that uses decorated wooden forms to shape the pasta. It's a classic fall dish with porcini mushrooms and pork sausage. That touch of tannin in the Dolcetto works with the fattiness of the sauce." —Andrea Bondi









type of oak used: barrique for stronger, spicier flavors; botte, or larger oak casks, for less wood influence; stainless steel or even cement for fruitiness. This inherent flexibility is what makes these wines so well suited to American cuisine, which borrows flavors, spices and cooking techniques from so many points on the globe.

These powerful reds and champion food companions are generally less known outside Italy. Here are profiles within the context of their food pairing potential, specific to the types of foods enjoyed most by American wine devotees.

## Barbera

Of the two grapes, Barbera is arguably the most flexible. It is marked by high, sometimes sharp, acidity, lower tannins and abundant fresh berry

and black fruit aromas. There is heated debate among producers about how far to go to soften its naturally high acidity; it is the acidity that makes Barbera one of the world's most food-friendly wines because the freshness cuts straight through the fatty component found in the dishes many of us most enjoy.

The people of Piedmont certainly love the acidity; their delicious pasta dishes and impressive range of local cheese almost seem purposely crafted to match their favorite drinking wine. Foreign markets appreciate acidity less and therefore some producers have started to experiment with various pruning methods, oak aging regimes, late harvests or even appassimento (air-drying the grapes) in order to tame that aggressive freshness and offer softer, more velvety wines. What is experimentation to some is seen as excessive interventionism to others: "Acidity is a



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"THESE ARE THE WINES  
WE GREW UP WITH,"  
SAYS RAFFAELLA  
BOLOGNA.

problem for Barbera," admits enologist Vincenzo Gerbi, who heads the Hastae project in which six producers (Braida, Michele Chiarlo, Coppo, Prunotto, Vietti and the grappa maker Berta) banded together in 1996 to create an experimental wine, Quorum. "It's also an incredibly flexible variety and that acidity can be reduced."

Like it or not, most successful food and wine pairings require acidity. Take any dish that starts with butter: the palate needs crispness to counter the fattiness, unctuousness and heaviness of these foods. The same is true of olive oil-based Mediterranean cuisine and recipes that rely on mayonnaise or one on the so-called "mother sauces" such as béchamel, hollandaise or velouté. Think of breaded veal scallops with clarified butter, langoustine bisque with crème fraîche, medallions of lamb with garlic cream sauce, sirloin steak with green peppercorns and heavy cream, leek pie with Gruyère cheese or grated parmigiano; soufflés, or savory crêpes with smoked salmon. The palate needs something refreshing and crisp between each fatty bite.

Cooking styles such as roasting, poaching and deep frying also result in



fact, these two qualities tend to balance sweeter foods, fragrant foods (with tomato sauces or perfumed herbs, for example) and foods with a fatty component, which is broken down by the tannins. If you are looking


dishes that can be paired with a high-acid wine like Barbera. Roasting cooks with dry heat, thus searing the skin and forming a crispy outside. The fatty juices flow into the center of the roast. Breaded dishes like veal scallopini or zucchini gratin also have extra fat absorbed within their crusts.

Barbera is a wine with good aging potential. The principal growing areas are Barbera d'Asti, Barbera d'Asti from the Nizza subzone, Barbera del Monferrato where the grape is believed to have originated, and Barbera d'Alba. These wines are also available in a superiore version released later. Abroad, it is found in Australia, California and Argentina, where it traveled with Italian immigrants.

## Dolcetto

Dolcetto is the easier, more fruit-forward wine with less aging potential; it is usually consumed within a year or two of release. As opposed to Barbera, it is marked by low acidity. Its food friendliness comes from its natural fruitiness and drying tannins. In a pairing partner to a steaming pizza pie with mozzarella and basil, or a home cooked plate of pasta, look no further than Dolcetto.

A pulpy, purplish appearance and bright aromas of wild berry, blueberry and fresh plum characterize the wine. It is thick and generous in the mouth and that natural heft is pushed along the palate by the polished tannins. It comes from many locations, and the most popular include Dolcetto di Dogliani, Dolcetto d'Acqui, Dolcetto d'Alba, Dolcetto d'Asti and Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba in Piedmont.

Pair it with cold cuts such as smoked sweet ham and salami dotted with black peppercorn, garlic and fatty particles. The aromatic qualities of these foods are accentuated by the fruitiness of the grape. Bruschetta with cream of green olive, or basil, chopped tomato and garlic also make a good companion. Dolcetto works very well with exotic appetizers such as herb and vegetable-stuffed spring rolls, Indian samosas with potato and sweet peas, curry or Tandoori dishes, or Caribbean curried pork with banana and coconut. 

## TOP-RATED BARBERAS AND DOLCETTOS

**92 Braida di Giacomo Bologna 2007 Bricco dell'Uccellone (Barbera d'Asti); \$NA.**

Imported by Vinifera Imports

**92 Cantina Iuli 2006 Barabba (Barbera del Monferrato Superiore); \$59.** Imported by Indie Wineries Division

**91 Fontanafredda 2007 Papagena (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$NA.** Imported by Domaine Select

**91 Prunotto 2007 Costamiòle (Barbera D'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$50.** Imported by Winebow

**91 Rivetto 2007 Lirano Soprano (Barbera D'Alba); \$50.** Imported by Vintage Imports Inc.

**91 Tenute Cisa Asinari Dei Marchesi di Gresi 2006 Monte Colombo (Barbera D'Asti); \$43.** Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct

**91 Vietti 2007 La Crena (Barbera D'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$45.** Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct

**91 Vinchio-Vaglio Serra 2004 Sei Vigne Insynthesis (Barbera D'Asti Superiore); \$70.** Imported by Ionia Atlantic

**90 Bricco Maiolica 2008 Sori Bricco Maiolica Superiore (Dolcetto di Diano Alba); \$25.** Imported by Zig Zagando

**90 Poderi Luigi Einaudi 2008 I Filari (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$38.** Imported by Empson USA Ltd.

**89 Pecchenino 2007 Siri D'Jermu (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$28.** Imported by Vias Imports

**88 Cascina Corte di Barosi Allesandro 2007 Vigna Pirocchetta (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$20.** Imported by Casa Bruno

**88 Gianni Voerzio 2009 Rochettevino (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$25.** Imported by BelVino. Editor's Choice.

**88 Marziano Abbona 2008 Papà Celso (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$20.** Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons

**88 Tre Donna 2007 Donna Rossa (Barbera D'Alba); \$16.** Imported by Small Vineyards LLC

**87 Renato Ratti 2009 Colombè (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$15.** Imported by Dreyfus Ashby. Editor's Choice.



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# EXPLORING SOUTH AUSTRAL BACK ROADS

Barossa and McLaren Vale get the lion's share of the accolades, but other parts of South Australia are producing world-class wines that are distinctly different.

BY JOE CZERWINSKI

**A**s my plane skipped down the runway and pulled up outside the terminal at Adelaide Airport, I could see the heat shimmering like waves over the tarmac. It was November, and while back home in New York it was 43°F, South Australia was already baking under an uncharacteristically early heatwave that sent the mercury soaring as high as 43°C (nearly 110°F). In my fall fleece and long pants, I was woefully overdressed—caught ill-prepared for what I discovered.

Wine lovers who've limited their Australian wine consumption to large multiregional blends or the big-name regions of Barossa and McLaren Vale are in for a similar shock. South Australia is the engine that drives the Australian wine industry, but it is also home to many of the small and medium-sized wineries that may prove to be the future of Australian wine, a more comfortable, personal approach with stronger ties to land and lifestyle.

Outside of McLaren Vale and Barossa, the approach is more low key, the regions are more unique and the wines are more varied. Armchair travelers will see the differences reflected in the wines, while if you are lucky enough to visit, you'll gain a whole new appreciation for the diversity and vinous bounty of South Australia.



PHOTO: MILTON WORDLEY/SOUTH LIGHT; JON VAN GORDER



# IA'S





## Clare Valley

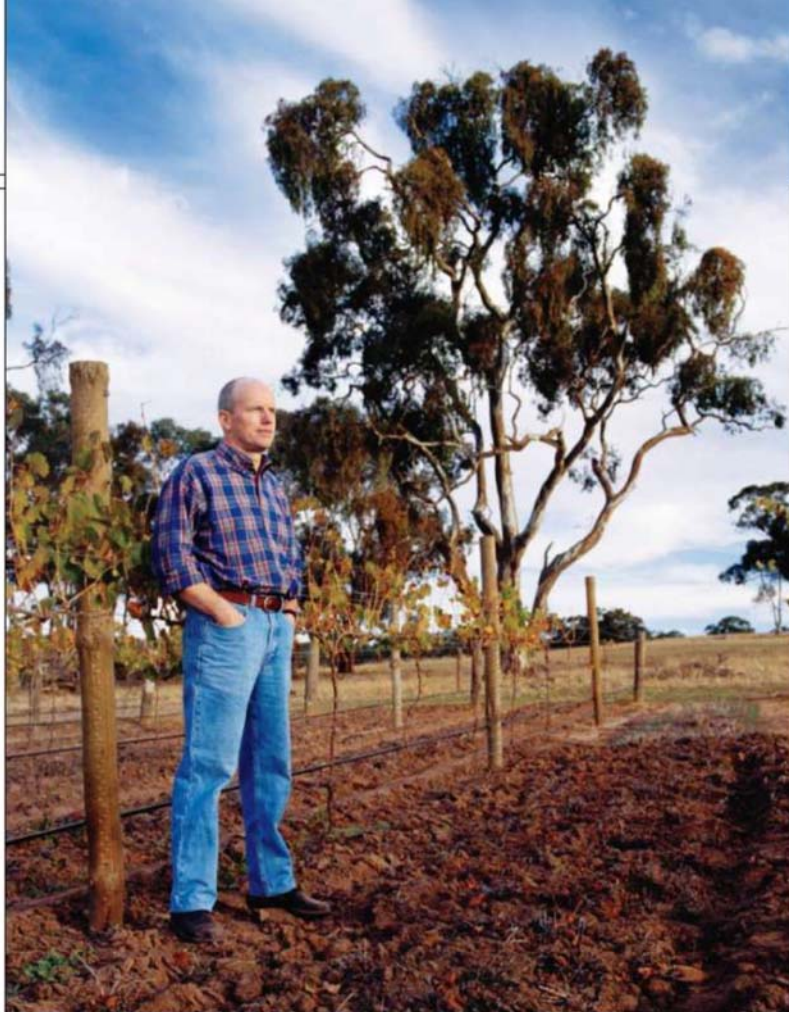
Located a scant two hours north of Adelaide, the Clare Valley is a wonderfully bucolic setting. Rolling hills define the landscape, with vineyards tucked into selected pockets. Think of it as Sonoma to Barossa's Napa, rarely getting the praise it deserves on the international level, yet capable of offering a wider range of wine styles than its neighbor.

Clare's biggest claims to fame are its Rieslings, which rival those of Barossa's Eden Valley for honors as some of Australia's best. "Clare Riesling is generous and fine, with a dry finish," says Jeffrey Grosset, one of the region's acknowledged leaders. Top examples combine vivid citrus fruit with crushed-stone minerality, aging gracefully to reveal honeyed richness alongside toast and marmalade complexity.

"The reason we can grow Riesling is the cool nights," explains Kilikanoon winemaker Kevin Mitchell. Yet as the Kilikanoon range illustrates, Clare can do more than just Riesling. Cabernet Sauvignon does well in warm sites, as does Shiraz. Even Grenache can ripen in the warmest spots and when the vintage cooperates.

Taylor's (sold under the Wakefield name in most overseas markets) was originally established as a Cabernet Sauvignon specialist in the 1960s, although it now produces a broad array of wines, widely available in the United States. The winery's Saint Andrew Cabernet Sauvignon is only produced in top vintages and remains an excellent example of Australian Cabernet, marrying herbal, tobacco-like notes with dark chocolate and cassis.

Reilly's is another Clare Valley name United States consumers will often see on the shelves. Its line of Barking Mad wines—made from young vines—offers a reliable introduction to the Clare Valley style at realistic prices, while the Dry Land Shiraz and Old Bushvine Grenache



Jeffrey Grosset stands in one of his Clare Valley vineyards. Grosset's Polish Hill Rieslings are capable of easily aging for 10 or more years.

often excel. Visitors to the winery's cellar door can even stay over at one of the property's four bed-and-breakfast cottages.

Knappstein's cellar door features another welcoming feature—its own microbrewery. In addition to the winery's attractive Riesling, visitors can refresh their palates with samples of Enterprise Reserve Lager, a fitting tribute to both the 1878 brewery building that houses the cellar door and the current ownership (Kirin of Japan, via Lion Nathan).

Constellation has closed its Leasingham winery in Clare but continues to produce Clare Valley wines under that label, although United States availability has been largely limited to the Rieslings of late. Annie's Lane, Foster's Clare Valley brand, is no longer being imported to the United States. With the big corporates out of the picture, American purchasers of Clare Valley wines can be reasonably certain that they are supporting family-run wineries.

### Clare Valley Wines To Try

**Cabernet Sauvignon:** Grosset, Jim Barry, Kilikanoon, Koonowla, Wakefield

**Grenache:** Kilikanoon, Reilly's

**Riesling:** Grosset, Jim Barry, Kilikanoon, Knappstein, Koonowla, Leasingham, \* Mount Horrocks, Pauletts, Petaluma, \* Pikes, Reilly's

**Shiraz:** Jim Barry, Kilikanoon, Koonowla, Pike's, Reilly's, Wakefield

\*Wineries located outside Clare Valley





## Adelaide Hills

Visitors to Adelaide can easily access the neighboring hills in 30 minutes or so by car from the city center. Spread out over hundreds of square miles, the pockets of vineyards nestled in the Adelaide Hills are far from a monoculture. Orchards and general farming are more the rule than vines, although the Hills are home to some of Australia's most exciting white wines and a smattering of interesting reds.

At Petaluma, the early emphasis was on sparkling wines, back in 1976 when Brian Croser established it. The Piccadilly Valley is the coolest viticultural region in South Australia, and is the focus of the winery's Chardonnay production, anchored by the Tiers Vineyard, which Croser planted in 1978. "It's always been the backbone of the [Petaluma] blend," says winemaker Andrew Hardy, now in his second stint with the winery.

Early versions of Petaluma's sparkling wines were Chardonnay-dominant, although the current-release 2007 Croser is 70% Pinot Noir. "The early wines needed more time on lees, also we're using more Chardonnay for table wines now," explains Hardy. Unlike most New World sparkling wines, Petaluma's ferment in barrel and are put through malolactic fermentation, giving them a soft, creamy palate with hints of toasted nuts.

Similar characters are often found in Adelaide Hills Chardonnay, which is very fine in most years. It can become a little warm and tropical in style from hot-weather vintages, as in the case of Shaw + Smith's 2008 M3 Chardonnay, but even that year's wines remain attractive for early drinking.

Michael Hill Smith, MW, one of the partners in that endeavor, says simply, "We try to make the wine we like and we hope that people buy it." At Shaw + Smith, the workhorse grape is Sauvignon Blanc, fast becoming a favorite in the Adelaide Hills. "It's fruitier than Sancerre,"

explains Hill Smith, a cousin of Yalumba owner Robert Hill Smith. "We trade herbaceousness for palate length any day," he says, describing the winery's signature style of Sauvignon.

Both Petaluma and Shaw + Smith produce Shiraz with distinctly peppery, savory profiles as well as white wines,



The gently rolling Adelaide Hills are becoming renowned for their finely balanced Chardonnays and Sauvignon Blancs, but Shiraz excels in some of the slightly warmer sites. Winemaker Dean Shaw and Michael Hill Smith, Master of Wine, together craft fine examples of all three.

and numerous other grape varieties are being trialed in the many microclimates of the Adelaide Hills. American consumers can find Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris from various producers, as well as an interesting, naturally low-alcohol Colombard from Primo Estate. Many wineries outside the region source grapes from the Adelaide Hills as well, giving consumers even more choice.

Visitors should take advantage of the region's vinous diversity and try some of the unique bottlings only available locally, including Petaluma's Viognier and single-vineyard Riesling and Shaw + Smith's Pinot Noir. The Shaw + Smith winery and cellar door is a sleek, modern building, while Petaluma's, housed in the 1860 Bridgewater Mill, is a top dining destination.

### Adelaide Hills Wines To Try

**Chardonnay:** D'Arenberg, \* Grosset, \* Henschke, \* Petaluma, Shaw + Smith, TapaNappa\*

**Sauvignon Blanc:** D'Arenberg, \* Groom, \* Henschke, \* Hewitson, \* Longview, Shaw + Smith, Sidewood

**Shiraz:** Longview, Nova Vita, Petaluma, Shaw + Smith, Sidewood

*\*Wineries located outside Adelaide Hills*





## Langhorne Creek Wines To Try

### Cabernet Sauvignon:

Bleasdale, Bremerton, Brothers in Arms, John's Blend, \* Lake Breeze, Temple Bruer

**Shiraz:** Bleasdale, Bremerton, Brothers in Arms, Lake Breeze, Two Hands, \* Winner's Tank, \* Zonte's Footstep\*

**Verdelho:** Bleasdale, Bremerton, Zonte's Footstep\*

\*Wineries located outside Langhorne Creek

## Langhorne Creek

A couple of hours to the south lies the unsung wine region that produces the biggest slice of Australia's red wine pie. It's not much of a place to overnight: accommodations are limited to a couple of cottages, and a single pub. At least it's a good, welcoming one known as the Bridge Hotel, which serves better-than-expected food in a country setting.

The main reason for visiting Langhorne Creek is the wine. Although some of the big brands have basically mothballed their vineyards and tax-incentivized investment schemes (companies) abandoned others, local farmers, long the foundation of the region, persist. The alluvial soils of the broad, flat floodplains of the Bremer River give the vines all the nutrients they need, while the cooling breezes off Lake Alexandrina help moderate the region's sunny climate, yielding rich red wines that have been known for their silky tannins for decades.

In fact, grape growing here goes back much further than Wolf Blass's trophy-winning wines of 1974–1976. The Potts family at Bleasdale planted their first grapevines in the 1860s, making theirs the second-oldest family-run winery in Australia (only Yalumba, in the Barossa, is older). "Until 1990, we were the only winery in the region," explains Robbie Potts. "Ninety-five percent of the fruit was going elsewhere, and only Wolfie was really giving any credit to the region."

At the Metala Homestead, Cabernet vines planted in 1891 and Shiraz vines planted in 1894 still produce fruit, destined for the Adams' family Brothers in Arms brand. "When they originally planted Cab and Shiraz on the property, they hit the nail on the head," proclaims Guy Adams, now the fifth generation of his family to work the Metala Homestead. "The wines can be quite perfumed and elegant," he says, adding, "Langhorne Creek has quite approachable wines. If you don't want to, you don't have to think about them."

That warm, cuddly, eager-to-please puppy-dog character, what Liz Adams calls, "the South Eastern Australia middle palate," marks many of the Cabernets and Shirazes from Langhorne Creek. It's also apparent in the relaxed, friendly nature of the cellar doors in this relatively tourist-free region. Visitors will find a number of wines not available in the United States, including Temple Bruer's preservative-free line of organic wines from eccentric retired chemist David Bruer, Bremerton's BOV ("Best of Vintage") Shiraz-Cabernet from dynamic sisters Rebecca and Lucy Willson and Lake Breeze's Grenache from the three Follett brothers.



Left: Some of the Potts family of Bleasdale enjoy a glass in front of the winery's 120-year-old Red Gum press. Above: Wrattenbully vineyards showing the region's distinctive red soil under the vine rows.

## Padthaway & Wrattenbully

Further along the South Australia coast—not right on the water, but about 30 miles inland—travelers next encounter the grape-growing region of Padthaway. Vineyards line either side of the main road, dotted with machinery sheds, but there are few wineries in evidence, nor many cellar doors. There's not even a pub, although there is a general store that sells wine. The big Stonehaven winery to the east of the road is shuttered, closed down by Constellation as part of its Australian restructuring.

That leaves Padthaway as very much a grape-growing area. In the United States, Padthaway's name recognition originally came from its appearance on Lindemans' upmarket Chardonnay, positioned above the immensely successful Bin 65 (it's now known as Lindemans Reserve Chardonnay, but still retains a Padthaway GI). Currently, the winery making the biggest waves in the States with Padthaway fruit is Henry's Drive Vignerons.

The wine is made up in McLaren Vale, but the vineyards and cellar door nestle on a gentle slope up from the highway. Proprietor Kim Longbottom's deceased husband, Mark, was from a local family; she now carries on the farming of approximately 200 acres of Padthaway vines. The entry-level Pillar Box Red and Pillar Box White represent consistently good value: "One year, Foster's didn't want the grapes, and Casella [Yellow Tail] didn't want to pay enough," explains Longbottom of the Pillar Box line, which has since grown to 125,000 cases.

Padthaway represents a midpoint on the spectrum between the warmth of Langhorne Creek and the cool southerly reaches of Coonawarra, and the wines reflect that, blending generous fruit with savory spice. Longbottom characterizes her wines thusly: "There's a bit of pepper, star anise as well, licorice...probably my favorite is the Parson's Flat [a blend of Shiraz and Cabernet]."

Just a bit further south and inland is Wrattenbully, a relatively recent addition to the South Australia wine scene, where Croser sources Caber-

## Padthaway & Wrattenbully Wines To Try

**Cabernet Sauvignon:** Henry's Drive Vignerons (P), Morambro Creek (P), TapaNappa (W)

**Chardonnay:** Lindemans (P)

**Merlot:** Smith & Hooper (W), TapaNappa (W)

**Shiraz:** Henry's Drive Vignerons (P), Morambro Creek (P)



2008  
CHARDONNAY  
87 PTS TOP VALUE  
—Wine Spectator, July, 31, 2010

2007  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON  
\*\*\*  
—Restaurant Wine, Issue 133, 134

2006  
ZINFANDEL  
86 PTS  
—Wine Spectator, June 30, 2010



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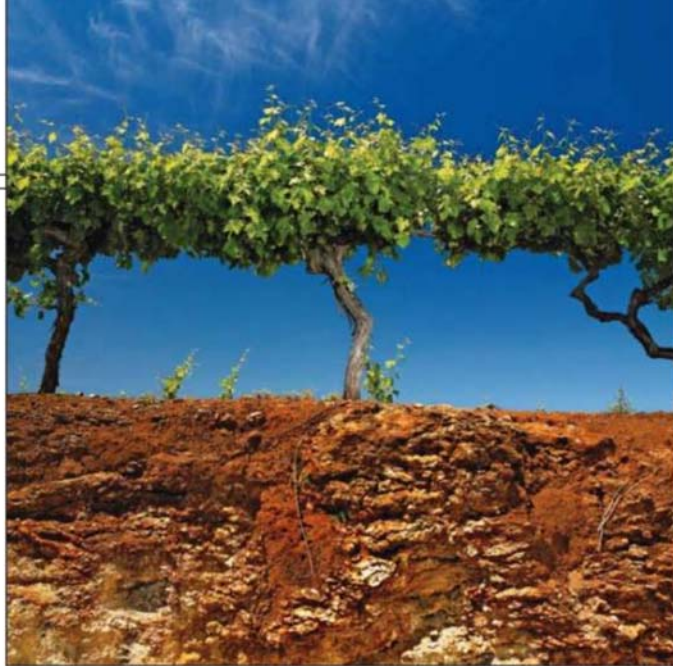


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Left: Senior Winemaker Renae Hirsch and Consultant Winemaker Kim Jackson are behind the Padthaway wines of Henry's Drive. Above: a soil profile showing Coonawarra's terra rossa over limestone bedrock.

net, Merlot and Shiraz for his tripartite TapaNappa project with Champagne Bollinger and Jean-Michel Cazes of Château Lynch-Bages. Yalumba has vineyards in the area as well, and Senior Red Winemaker Peter Gambetta confides, "We're pretty excited about Merlot in Wrattobully."

The region shares similar soils to Padthaway to the north and Coonawarra to the south: areas of terra rossa and dark sandy loams over limestone bedrock. The underlying limestone aquifers provide the water needed for frost protection and irrigation in these three regions, which are collectively referred to as the Limestone Coast.

## Coonawarra

In Coonawarra, the true terra rossa soils that made the region famous occur in a narrow strip, explains Greg Foster, winemaker for Penley Estate, as we tour the vineyards. "Compared to the rest of South Australia, it's quite cool here," he continues, which is why Coonawarra has become virtually synonymous with Cabernet.

The connection between Cabernet Sauvignon and Coonawarra goes back to the 1950s, when Wynns Coonawarra Estate released its acclaimed 1954 Black Label Cabernet Sauvignon. Wynns founder John Riddoch planted his first vines in 1891, and the original winery building dates from 1896. Now under the ownership of Fosters, Wynns is sadly no longer being distributed in the United States, so American consumers are missing out on winemaker Sue Hodder's wines, true benchmarks for the region.

Visitors should be sure to stop by the cellar door, located in the historic winery, and try the wines, particularly the iconic Michael Shiraz and John Riddoch Cabernet Sauvignon, both among the region's best. Some-

what surprisingly, there's even a pretty credible Riesling. Almost exactly across the road from the winery entrance is Fodder, a fine spot for lunch or a casual dinner.

Folks stuck in the States can still get some mighty fine Coonawarra wines. Gambetta, who crafts Yalumba's The Menzies label from the company's Coonawarra vineyards, points out that Yalumba's first vintage of Octavius in 1986 was made from Coonawarra Cabernet. "Coonawarra is the most varietally distinct," he suggests. "Mostly due to the soil. If you get off the terra rossa it tastes totally different."

Prototypical Coonawarra Cab has a finely delineated structure and trademark tobacco and cedar shadings; there's often some mint or eucalyptus character evident as well, and plenty of French oak is the norm. Still, there is an array of styles, ranging from the ripe, lush textures of Katnook Estate and Penley Estate to the more firmly tannic, structured wines of Balnaves and Parker Coonawarra Estate.

"The style of wine we're making, we're trying to get strong tannins," explains Peter Bissell, the winemaker for both of those properties and winemaker at Wynns from 1989–1995. "We're trying to make a style different from everybody else." Influenced by his experience in Bordeaux, Bissell is searching for equivalent ageworthiness in his wines married to the bold fruit he gets from the Coonawarra vineyards.

Despite the strong connection between Coonawarra and Cabernet, it only accounts for approximately 60% of the area's vines. Shiraz is the next most widely planted variety, at 20%. "Shiraz does best on the sandier soils," contends Penley Estate's Foster. At Majella, a fair amount of Shiraz is made in a sparkling style, which the voluble, chatty Brian "Prof" Lynn describes as "the ultimate breakfast wine." It's richly fruity, lushly textured and long on the finish, a top example of the style.

I'm not sure I would drink it with breakfast myself, but it is the kind of authentic, unique wine expression that explorers of South Australia's back roads—whether literally or vinously—will be amply rewarded by. **W**

PHOTOS: MILTON WORDLEY/SOUTHLIGHT

### Coonawarra Wines To Try

**Cabernet Sauvignon:** Balnaves, Jim Barry,\* Katnook Estate, Majella, Parker Coonawarra Estate, Penley Estate, Wynns Coonawarra Estate, Yalumba\*

**Shiraz:** Majella, Penfolds Bin 128,\* Penley Estate, Wynns Coonawarra Estate  
\*Wineries located outside Coonawarra.



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Desde 1890



# *California Sauvignon Blanc*

## BEST BETS

*Proud wineries are bringing California's under-the-radar white to new heights. Here are the wines to try for a genuine, but elevated, SB blast.*

BY STEVE HEIMOFF

**D**o you drink much California Sauvignon Blanc? If you answered yes, you're probably in the minority.

Most wine lovers say that SB makes for a nice cocktail sipper, but few would think of drinking it throughout the meal. Chardonnay, yes. Certainly white Bordeaux, maybe a great Sancerre. But not Sauvignon Blanc. It's not hard to discern why. Much Sauvignon Blanc is too sweet. Instead of refreshing the palate, it tires it. Even when the wine is fully dry, it can be linear, one-dimensional.

Unoaked Sauvignon Blancs, inspired by the stainless steel Chardonnay trend, can be crisp and fruity. But they're not particularly complex. For that, you need the full-bore treatment of oak barrel fermentation and/or aging, sur lies with battonage and, sometimes, a little blending with a companion grape, often Sémillon.

Yet even when made in this Graves style, Sauvignon Blanc can be heavy-handed. The grape is a notorious overcropper, meaning that vintners sometimes let yields run amok. That gives a green, disagreeable cut to the wine that no amount of oak can soften. And sometimes, winemakers simply plaster on the oak too thick.

Happily, there's an increasing quantity of very good Graves-style bottlings. Among top performers are Illumination (from Quintessa), Dutton Estate and Gainey, and smaller, newer producers like Source Napa, Joseph Jewell, Peter Franus and Modus Operandi.

But in terms of consistency, there are three California vineyards that reliably produce solid SB fruit year in and year out. Granted, there's a certain arbitrariness in choosing just three. But these are solid bets. Try wines with these vineyards on the label and you may find yourself reaching for Sauvignon Blanc instead of Chardonnay with your next great meal.





CHALK HILL  
ESTATE GROWN  
SAUVIGNON BLANC  
CHALK HILL, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY  
2008  
*John D. Smith* PROPRIETOR

TO KALON I B MOIC K  
2006  
ROBERT MONDAVI WINERY

Sauvignon  
2009  
Brander  
CUVÉE  
Nicolas





Genevieve Janssens, director of winemaking at Robert Mondavi Winery, has described the To Kalon vineyard (right) as “a star. One of the most extraordinary vineyards on earth.” It was first planted in the late 1800s by H.W. Crabb, who named it. (To Kalon is Greek for “most beautiful.”)

## Mondavi I Block: old vines, great terroir

The first thing you notice about the I Block of Robert Mondavi's To Kalon Vineyard is its beauty. To the west, a few hundred feet away, is the wall of the Mayacamas. To the east is the winery itself, with its famous arch and campanile. And here, where you stand on dry, fine dirt, you perceive how the vineyard gently slopes from the base of the mountains to where it hits the valley floor, just across a dirt path, and levels off.

This is the Oakville bench, and the five-acre I Block, entirely planted to Sauvignon Blanc (called Fumé Blanc at Mondavi), sits in its tenderloin. The slight grade means that I Block is perfectly drained, even after a wet season like 2009-2010. Across that dirt path, on the vineyard's flats, where the water settles, the wines are not so fine.

You notice, too, that the vines are entirely untrellised. They're head-trained, bush-like plants grown in what's called *gobelet* fashion (as in goblet), meaning the foliage forms into a rounded canopy of overhead leaves. More than half of I Block's vines date to 1945, when head training was the norm; when old vines are replaced, their successors are trained in the gobelet style, notes Mondavi's chief winemaker, Genevieve Janssens.

“And I Block is unirrigated,” she adds. “It doesn't need to be watered. It's so balanced, it takes care of itself. Our vineyard manager says it's the vineyard where we expend the least amount of money and effort.”

When a vineyard is balanced, the wine it makes will be balanced, unless the winemaker screws up, something Janssens and her team aren't going to do. The grapes are hand-harvested, with younger vines

rested overnight in a cold cellar, it is inoculated—no wild yeasts here. The fermentation takes about 45 days, during which time the wine is stirred on its lees about twice a week, in the process known as battonage, which gives a creamy, pleasantly tart note to the finished wine. When fermentation is complete, the wine remains on its lees for an additional nine months. It is never put through malolactic fermentation, to preserve vitality. In the August following the vintage, both tank and barrel wines are blended in a stainless-steel tank. A few months later, the wine is bottled, then held back another nine months before release. Production is small; only 233 cases were produced in 2006, which is the current release.

I Block can be interpreted as the quintessence of 100% Oakville Sauvignon Blanc, although it is also, of course, the essence of To Kalon. Janssens's Reserve Fumé Blanc contains some Sémillon, also from To Kalon; though that fruit is sourced from other blocks in the vineyard, it often is as great as I Block. But for an experience of the greatest Sauvignon purity, I Block reigns supreme. It is one of the few California Sauvignon Blancs to be ageable; the 1999 is drinking beautifully.

## Chalk Hill: estate blending from the western Mayacamas

Forty miles northwest of To Kalon—but with the Mayacamas in between—is Chalk Hill's estate vineyard. Here, the mountains play a greater role, because the vines grow directly on its slopes and in its swales. This is true mountain viticulture.

The vineyard is 277 planted acres, with Sauvignon Blanc comprising 15% of the total. But, as Chalk Hill's winemaker, Jordan Fiorentini, and vineyard operations chief, Mark Lingenfelder, remind you, the Sauvignon is divided among 11 clones of the variety, including the Musqué clone from the Loire and various forms of the Gris clone from Bordeaux and Chile. The Estate Sauvignon Blanc, which more often than

picked earlier. In the winery, only free run juice is used, “because when you squeeze the press [grapes], the juice has more bitterness,” Janssens explains. Grapes from younger vines tend to be fermented in stainless steel barrels, while fruit from older vines goes into oak barrels. The wine benefits from this combination. “I Block is like a history of humanity,” Janssens says. “The young fruit is impetuous, with great energy. The older vines have the benefit of old age, with philosophy and complexity.”

After the juice has

PHOTO RIGHT: MICK ROCK/CEPHAS



not receives scores of 90 points or above, is a clonal blend.

These are extraordinarily rich, balanced wines, never suffering from green, unripe notes. As with Mondavi's I Block, the juice is fermented in both stainless steel and oak barrels, and aged sur lies. But the key to the wines' consistency lies in the vineyard.

The vines follow the contours of the Mayacamas as it tumbles down from the high plateau of Knights Valley. The vineyard is shaped like a bowl; roughly half the vines, in the eastern part, are at elevations up to 600 feet. Here, in rocky, volcanic, well-drained soils, are planted red Bordeaux varieties, as you'd expect. "But at the highest elevations, it's too windy to ripen Cabernet, so we grow Sauvignon Blanc instead," Lingenfelder notes.

In the flat part of the bowl, which Lingenfelder calls Chalk Hill Valley, are more plantings of Sauvignon Blanc. "It's cooler down here, with more fog," the viticulturalist asserts, "and the soils are heavier clay." This would be unsuitable for Cabernet; unsuitable, too, for Chardonnay, which does well just a few dozen yards away, in gravelly soil. "But Sauvignon Blanc loves the clay," says Lingenfelder. The two sites—hillside and valley—"are two different worlds," he notes, because the hills ripen weeks earlier. But from winemaker Fiorentini's point of view, "It's hard to say how the two Sauvignon Blancs are different. Quality-wise, they're very similar."

As at To Kalon, Chalk Hill's Sauvignon Blanc is hand-harvested. The grapes are carefully sorted to pick out unripe berries and MOG (material other than grapes) and crushed—but, again, carefully. Fiorentini explains, "The most important thing in Sauvignon Blanc is aromatics, so the wine is protected from oxygen all its life." Fermentation is mostly whole cluster. "The only reason we destem a little bit," Fiorentini points out, "is for skin contact." A chemical compound in skins, thiol, adds aromatic and textural complexities. Chalk Hill's Sauvignon Blancs never undergo malolactic fermentation. "It gets too flabby if you do [malolactic]. We want that acidity to balance the richness," the winemaker observes.

Every year, Fiorentini crafts a few clonal bottlings of Sauvignon Blanc. "We'll look for the most unique, high-personality lots" from among the 35 or so lots produced. In recent years, the clonal bottlings have tended to be Musqué and Gris. The 2008 Musqué is a sensation. But so difficult are these wines to procure, and so unpredictable (there might not be a 2009 Musqué), that consumers are better off seeking the estate blend,



Sauvignon Blanc does well both on the hillside and valley floor at Chalk Hill. The estate is 1,477 acres total, of which 350 are under vine, in 60 different vineyards.

which is far easier to find (production on the '08 was 5,100 cases). It is classic Sauvignon Blanc, rich and citrusy, with just a hint of gooseberry. These wines hit their peak three or four years after release.

### **Brander:** exploring SB's possibilities

Visitors to the Santa Ynez Valley know that, once they pass the little town of Los Olivos heading east on Highway 154, the rolling benches and foothills of the San Gabriels turn thick with vineyards. Here, where Roblar Avenue hits the highway, is The Brander Vineyard. It dates to 1975, making it one of the oldest in the appellation.

THESE WINES HEW VERY CLOSELY TO THE WHITE GRAVES STYLE, BUT THEY ARE NOT WHITE GRAVES AND DO NOT PRETEND TO BE. THEY SIMPLY ELEVATE CALIFORNIA SAUVIGNON BLANC TO ITS HIGHEST EXPRESSION.

The vineyard contains 20 acres of Sauvignon Blanc, mostly the same Gris clone grown at Chalk Hill. And a very special Sauvignon Blanc it is, earning any number of 90-plus scores from this magazine, more than any other from Santa Barbara County.

The majority is made from purchased fruit, ending up in owner/winemaker Fred Brander's basic Santa Ynez Valley bottling. From the estate vineyard itself, however, Brander explores the possibilities of Sauvignon Blanc, crafting three distinct styles. Cuvée Natalie, blended with Riesling and Pinot Gris, is stainless-steel produced and off-dry. Au Naturel is





Fred Brander and, far left, the tasting room at Brander Vineyard, one of the pioneering wineries in the Santa Ynez Valley; in addition to Sauvignon Blanc, they also craft Bordeaux-style reds.

unoaked, 100% varietal, and bone dry. Brander's richest bottling is Cuvée Nicholas, named after Fred's son; it is made in the Graves style, barrel fermented and aged sur lie.

In any given vintage, Au Naturel vies with Cuvée Nicholas for top honors. Both are made only with free-run juice. Au Naturel is extraordinarily complex, testimony to the greatness of the estate's terroir. If the grapes are employed in Nicholas, with the added luxuriousness of oak and lees, the result is one of California's most consistently great Sauvignon Blancs.

Brander himself credits the soil. "It's very gravelly, with a little clay. We call alluvial soils like this 'terrace deposits', washed down from the Santa Ynez uplands," or the slopes of the San Gabriels. The gravel makes the soil exceptionally well drained, although, with average annual rainfall of only 10 inches, the soil never gets very wet to begin with.

Add to this consistently dry weather a warmish climate, and you get what Brander calls a "uniform hydrology and terroir" that Sauvignon Blanc loves. For comparison's sake, he notes, "it's not as hot as Happy Canyon, but warmer than Santa Rita Hills." Brander is leading an effort to have this area achieve its own Los Olivos American Viticultural Area

designation. The vinification of Cuvée Nicholas echoes that of Mondavi I Block and Chalk Hill estate, with a single exception: it contains as much as 25% Sémillon. Brander may feel that, given the uniformity of his Gris clone grapes, he doesn't have the option of blending with different clones. But the Sémillon makes up for that. "The vines are over 30 years old, and when they're good, they're very good," he says. "As the vines get older, we get much smaller clusters, and we harvest later, let them ripen to 25, 26 [Brix]. That brings an oily, almost Pinot Gris-style richness. It's wonderful with the balanced grassiness of Sauvignon Blanc."

Indeed, Nicholas shows hints of grass alongside ripe melons, citrus and figs, but it's never green. "We never overcrop, which gives unripe flavors," Brander explains. And the fairly warm Los Olivos climate allows for consistent ripeness. Back in the 1980s, Brander made Sauvignon Blanc from Brian Babcock's vineyard, in the Santa Rita Hills. "Boy, was that grassy!" he remembers, without fondness.

After crush, most of Nicholas goes into French oak, 50% new; a small percent is put into stainless steel. The wine is kept in barrel only three or four months before bottling, and is released to the market in spring following the vintage. Says Brander, "Most people who do oak-aged Sauvignon Blanc will keep it in barrel closer to a year. Certainly, they do with white Graves. But I find the fruit suffers [with longer barrel aging], and I want to preserve as much fruit in Nicholas as possible." As at Mondavi and Chalk Hill, Brander avoids malolactic fermentation on his Sauvignon Blancs. "I want to retain that malic acid character as much as possible. And I don't want the textural character associated with malolactic to come into play."

You have only to taste the current 2009 vintage of Cuvée Nicholas to appreciate its purity. It is a wine to savor now and for a few more years.

While it's accurate to say that Cuvée Nicholas, Mondavi's I Block and Chalk Hill's Estate are the closest California comes to white Graves, it's not entirely fair: they are not white Graves and do not pretend to be. They simply elevate California Sauvignon Blanc to its highest expression. If consumers are getting serious about Sauvignon, it will be because of wines like these. **WE**

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Chalk Hill	Modus Operandi
David Arthur	Peter Franus
Dutton Estate	Quintessa
Foxen	Robert Mondavi
Gainey	Santa Barbara Winery
Greenwood Ridge	Six Sigma
Groth	Source Napa
Joseph Carr	Tangent



FOR FULL REVIEWS OF THESE CALIFORNIA PRODUCERS' SAUVIGNON BLANCS, GO TO [winemag.com/buyingguide](http://winemag.com/buyingguide)

PHOTO TOP LEFT MICK ROCK/CEPHAS; BOTTOM JON VAN GORDER





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# DRINKING YOUR WAY THROUGH CENTRAL EUROPE

BY STEPHEN BEAUMONT

In our society's inexhaustible race towards the new and innovative, be it in art or architecture, food or drink, we sometimes lose sight of the enduring appeal of the old. And so traditional French bistro fare takes a back seat to the latest "molecular" movement; the Libeskind-designed Michael Lee-Chin Crystal addition to Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum overshadows the century-old building on which it sits; and flavored vodkas, so-called "Imperial" beer styles and cryogenically produced dessert wines assume the space previously allotted to the drinks which inspired them.

But as much as the new and modern lures us forward, we appreciate, too, that there is no understanding of progress without awareness of the past. Fortunately, where drink is concerned, retreating through time is often no more difficult than boarding a plane.

In Hungary, for example, millennia of wine production have resulted in a broad palate of flavors, some renown, such as the sweet "King of Wine, Wine of the King" from Tokaji, and others more obscure but historically no less significant.

There is no denying the long-standing influence of the sweet golden nectar of Tokaji, the world's original unfortified dessert wine, according to fairly conclusive documentation dating from the 16th century, but that shouldn't lead visitors to overlook the increasingly impressive dry whites emerging from the same

region. Similarly, the post-Communist consolidation of wineries has led to a steady rise in the quality of classic Hungarian red varieties like Kékfrankos and the once-ubiquitous "Bull's Blood" grape, Kadarka.

Further north, where verdant vineyards turn to lazy fields of flowing grain, distillation finds a home in Poland, arguably its first home where making spirits from anything other than grapes is concerned. Vodka is, of course, the drink of choice in Krakow and Warsaw, although lager and imported wine now also vie for table space, particularly among the young.

Many Poles will tell you that they invented vodka and many Russians will claim the same, each with some validity, but one point of origin in central Europe is beyond dispute. In 1842, in the Bohemian town of Plzen, now Czech and known in English as Pilsen, the blonde lager was born.

Oddly, it was a German brewer hired by the town burghers who actually first combined newly available pale golden malt with the local soft water, saaz hops and, pivotally, the bottom-fermenting yeast he brought with him from Bavaria, thus creating the beer we now know as pilsner. That beer, Pilsner Urquell (literally "original pilsner") is still brewed in Pilsen today, and served across the Czech Republic and around the globe.

We hereby present your itinerary, in case you should find yourself footloose and thirsty in Central Europe.



## Pivovarský Dům

The same sort of innovation that led to pale lager in Pilsen is right at home in this Prague brewpub, located appropriately enough in the more modern quarter of the city. Coffee beer? Nettle beer? Lager fermented with Champagne yeast? It's all here, along with a most affordable menu of Czech-style beer cuisine. And for those in the mood for more traditional beer styles, the pub also features unfiltered light and dark lagers of their own creation, both by the name of Štěpán. ([gastroinfo.cz/pivodum](http://gastroinfo.cz/pivodum))

## U Cerného Vola

Authenticity in the midst of tourism central is a rare beast indeed, but this delightful pub manages it nonetheless, with brick flooring, weathered wooden picnic-style tables and unpasteurized Kozel 12° beer. Despite its location in the shadow of Prague castle, this is first and foremost a locals' place—management has a low tolerance for large groups, so be forewarned if travelling with more than a few friends.



## U Medvídků

Beer travelers may think they have found heaven in this combination hotel, brewpub, traditional Czech beer hall and late-closing bar just steps from Wenceslas Square. Begin at the second floor brewery, but don't believe it when they tell you they brew the strongest lager in the world. (At 12.6% alcohol, it's not even close.) Then repair downstairs to one of the largest beerhalls in Prague for half-liters of Budweiser Budvar and an ample sausage plate before crossing the hall to the late-night Budvar Bar and its broad selection of regional Czech beers. ([umedvidku.cz](http://umedvidku.cz))





### Sense Cafe

The combination of vodka and Asian food might sound odd, but at Sense it works. The restaurant and bar claims to have the largest collection of Polish vodkas in the world, and they augment the selection with their own proprietary infusions. Boasts a spare but stylish, hip but relaxed ambiance and deftly executed menu. (sensecafe.com.pl)



### Restauracja Bazyliśzek

While its somewhat clichéd look and location in the center of the Stare Miasto, or Old Town, might set off your tourist trap warning bells, Bazyliśzek is very much the real deal. Traditional Polish cuisine is served in generous portions; a small but eclectic selection of vodkas is available to sip or shoot alongside one-liter steins of Polish beer. (bazyliśzek.waw.pl)



Much as American hipsters turn to former working-class beer brands to prove their cool, potato vodka, once derided as a poor man's spirit, is on the rebound both in Poland and abroad. Chopin is one example. Other Polish vodkas are likely to be rye based, like Sobieski and Extra Żytnia, which gives them a character more spicy and assertive than the rounder, sweeter potato vodkas.

Pilsner Urquell has begat innumerable offspring, including such Czech beauties as Budweiser Budvar, known on this side of the Atlantic as Czechvar, and Bernard Světlý Ležák, not to mention enough smaller market wonders to make the journey to Prague well worth the effort.

Praha  
Prague

Czech Republic

Czech brewers tend to designate their beers not by style, but by the density of the wort (unfermented beer) measured in degrees Plato. So a single brand may boast versions of 12°, 16° and 24° (respectively about 5%, 6.5–7% and 10% alcohol by volume). The most common exceptions to this rule are černé, a black, sweeter style, and tmavé, a deep amber brew, and regardless of strength or hue, the vast majority of Czech beers are lagers.

Unlike some others in the so-called "Vodka Belt" countries, Poles see nothing wrong with flavored vodkas; they've been adding herbs and other seasonings to their spirits for centuries. One of the most popular is Zubrówka, the pale green vodka flavored with a grass native to Poland and preferred by grazing bison, hence its nickname of "bison grass vodka." Try it on its own or in a "tatanka" with unsweetened apple juice and a lemon wedge.

Poland

Krakow

### Wódka Bar

A charming bar that serves vodka and only vodka. Small, friendly and utterly without pretense, it stands in stark contrast to Krakow's apparently unlimited array of pubs, clubs and dives where students gather to drink cheap beer and scream at each other over blaring music. (No Web site, but a bilingual page on Facebook.)

### Baroque Wódka & Food

With its abundance of baroque churches, Krakow has been described as a "second Rome." This temple, however, was built not to religion, but to vodka, over 100 of them, with a few hundred vodka-based cocktails added for good measure. Stylishly designed, centrally located in the Old Town and open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, Baroque manages the tricky task of combining respect for the old with comforts of the new, and provides one of the most thoughtful and relaxed drinking environments in the former capital. (baroque.com.pl)

Hungary

Budapest

### Klassz

When the revered restaurant Vörös és Fehér closed a few years ago, its place in the wine firmament was taken over by Klassz, a joint venture between Hungary's leading chain of wine shops and restaurateur Roland Radványi. The lengthy and predominantly Hungarian wine list is entirely available by the glass, with bottles also on hand for purchase at the table or to go, and the bistro-style menu is well executed. (klassz.eu)

### Ráspi Budapest

The definitive place in which to experience the marriage of Hungarian food and wine, this attractive restaurant features the wines of owner József Horváth's own estate, also called Ráspi, as well as those of other leading Hungarian wineries, all paired with a seasonal cuisine grounded in the country's roots and traditions. Sophisticated yet homey, Ráspi offers a snapshot of Hungary's gastronomic past and a peek at Budapest's culinary future. (raspihungary.hu)

### Terroir Club



When you're ready to buy some bottles to take home or to your room, this is the place to visit. Specializing in small wineries and so dealing in limited quantities, many of the wines here are biodynamic and most are organic, sourced principally from Hungary and neighboring nations. As reflected in the name, emphasis is given to wines that best reflect their regions' terroir. (terroirclub.hu)

Visitors exploring Hungary's enological landscape are advised to visit Lake Balaton, a fast-emerging region near the Austrian border producing dry, mineral whites that could eventually rank among the best in the world.



In Central Europe, the toast is an integral part of the ritual of imbibement. Look your cohorts in the eyes when you toast here; it's considered bad form and bad luck not to do so. Standard phrases are Na zdrowie (Poland), Na zdraví (Czech Republic) and Egészségedre (Hungary)—all wishing good health.





PAIRINGS

# Bringing Home The Mighty Asado

No meal is more interwoven into the South American way of life than the grill fest known as the asado.

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BY MICHAEL SCHACHNER

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It is the start of the weekend in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, South America's three leading wine-producing countries, and this means one thing from a culinary perspective: it's time to start preparing the *asado*, code for an hours-long bacchanal headlined by myriad grilled meats and aided by the likes of clay-oven baked empanadas, bowls full of salads, fresh local vegetables and countless bottles of wine.

Having had the opportunity to visit South America on many occasions to report on this part of the world's wine industry, I can attest to the fact that the asado, which is based on the Spanish word *asador* (to cook a whole animal; also the person who does the roasting), is a big part of life itself there. On any given Sunday families and friends gather in parks, backyards and pretty much any place they can build a fire and set up a grill to partake in the divine blend of gluttony and human interaction that is the asado.

Let it be said that the asado is no dietetic exercise, and we certainly wouldn't recommend getting your cholesterol tested the morning after. But there's no denying the satisfaction that comes from indulging in huge amounts of perfectly grilled grass-fed steaks, sizzling sausages, succulent ribs or maybe even a spit-roasted whole baby lamb or goat accompanied by side dishes and local wines ranging from white varieties like Sauvignon Blanc or Torrontés to reds including Pinot Noir, Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Call it South America's version of the picnic, or even a down-home barbecue, but under no circumstances should one ever call it a light and simple meal. For in South America, the asado is paramount, and the volume of what goes down the hatch is potentially mind-boggling.

## The home asado

In asado-addicted countries like Argentina and Chile, many homes, public parks and wineries are equipped with clay ovens (*hornos de barro*) for baking empanadas, casseroles and vegetables, while open



PHOTOS ALDO SESSA/GETTY; JON VAN GORDER





Chimichurri and Cabernet Sauvignon complement a boneless rib eye.





PAIRINGS



Burnt Carrots with Goat Cheese and  
Caramelized Endives with Vinegar



fire pits called *fogóns* are also ubiquitous. In the United States we don't have the same ingrained outdoor cooking mentality, nor the accessories, fire pits and readily available hardwoods that fuel the asado. But that doesn't mean one can't replicate the South American asado by using one's kitchen and a makeshift fire pit or large grill.

To get your asado going, a trip the butcher or meat department of your local supermarket is stop one. In South America, an asado will usually be based around the grilling and serving of sausages, some chicken parts, and several cuts of beef, ranging from the skirt steak (called *entraña*) to the ribs to some prime cuts, highlighted by the rib eye (*ojo de bife*), for which cooking instructions follow. Generally speaking, asado attendees start nibbling slowly before hitting the prime cuts with gusto. Meanwhile, the cooking is always spread over several hours to allow everyone to imbibe, chat and relax.

Accompanying the meats are numerous salads and vegetable dishes. Most often, dessert is limited to some fresh fruits such as grapes, apples, pears, melons and berries.

To get proper guidance on how to do your own South American-styled asado, we turned to *Seven Fires*, an excellent new book by world-renowned Argentine chef Francis Mallmann, who owns restaurants in Buenos Aires and Mendoza, Argentina, as well as in Punta del Este, Uruguay. Following are recipes for the perfect rib eye steak, chimichurri, which Argentines use to dress their meats, sausages, potatoes and empanadas, and a pair of hardy vegetable dishes.

Granted, you may not be cooking for four generations of family, and this being the United States and not South America you may not be seeking to feed an army. But by adhering to Mallmann's recipes you should be able to build the foundation for a truly delicious and authentic asado. And to that we raise a glass of Argentinean Malbec and say, *salud y buen provecho!*

The following recipes were excerpted (and slightly adapted) from *Seven Fires* by Francis Mallmann (Artisan Books). Copyright 2009.

## The Perfect Steak

(preferably a grass-fed, aged rib eye)

About an hour (or maybe a little more) before you plan to serve the meat, start a wood fire off to the side of the grill. A hardwood such as oak, maple, hickory or birch will work best, while a wide grate that

LET IT BE SAID THAT THE  
ASADO IS NO  
DIETETIC EXERCISE, AND WE  
CERTAINLY WOULDN'T  
RECOMMEND GETTING  
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THE MORNING AFTER. BUT  
THERE'S NO DENYING THE  
SATISFACTION THAT COMES  
FROM INDULGING IN HUGE  
AMOUNTS OF PERFECTLY  
GRILLED GRASS-FED STEAKS.

allows for the coals to drop down is ideal. Charcoal briquettes are also a viable option, though not as authentic or flavor-imparting as natural hardwood coals.

As your coals are in the works, allow your steak to warm to room temperature, then liberally salt the exterior to taste. When you have a nice two-inch-thick bed of coals, place the grill roughly four inches above the coals, and when you have a layer of white ash covering the coals you are ready to begin cooking. But first check the temperature of your fire by placing your hands at the level that the meat will cook. You should only be able to hold your hands above the coals for about two to three seconds, which indicates that you have a hot bed of coals that are ready. Keep a spray bottle filled with water handy to douse any flare ups.

Before placing the steak on the grill, grease the grill using a piece of meat fat or a paper towel moistened with olive oil. Next place the meat on the grill and listen for a nice sizzle. Then do not touch or move the steak for five minutes, at which point you should gently lift

an edge with tongs to check for sear marks. Then rotate the meat 90 degrees to create a crosshatch pattern and to prevent burning. After four more minutes, turn the steak over and cook for another seven minutes, or until it's medium-rare. As before, check after five minutes and rotate to prevent burning. Transfer to a platter and let rest for three minutes. Slice or serve whole, with chimichurri.

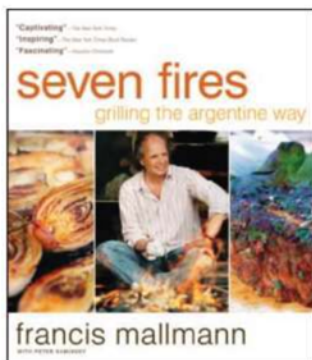
## Chimichurri

Chimichurri, a classic Argentine dressing for meats, chicken and sausages, changes from town to town and chef to chef, but it's traditionally based on a combination of olive oil, parsley, oregano and spices.

- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon coarse salt
- 1 head garlic, separated into cloves and peeled
- 1 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 1 cup fresh oregano leaves
- 2 teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil

Start by making a *salmuera* by bringing the water to a boil in a small saucepan. Add the salt and stir until dissolved. Remove from heat and allow the *salmuera* to cool.

Meanwhile, mince garlic as finely as possible and place in a medium bowl. Mince parsley and oregano leaves and add to the garlic along with red pepper flakes. Whisk in the red wine vinegar and then the olive oil. Whisk in the *salmuera* before transferring to a jar with a tight-fitting lid.





Refrigerate. (The best chimichurri is prepared at least a day in advance so that the flavors can blend; chimichurri can last up to 3 weeks if properly sealed and refrigerated.) *Makes about 2 cups.*

## Burnt Carrots with Goat Cheese, Parsley, Arugula and Crispy Garlic Chips

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
 ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
 Coarse salt  
 Freshly ground black pepper  
 8 medium carrots, peeled  
 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped  
 1 small bunch flat-leaf parsley, leaves only  
 2 bunches arugula, trimmed, washed and dried  
 6 ounces goat cheese, sliced into ½-inch thick rounds

### For garlic chips:

8 large garlic cloves  
 1½ to 2 cups extra virgin olive oil

## WINE RECOMMENDATIONS

Grilled meat in almost every form is the basis of the South American asado, but even the most carnivorous of feasts needs a starting point—for example, empanadas, maybe some smoked salmon and a few salads, either entirely fresh or with mayonnaise or another dressing. To begin your bacchanal, we suggest cracking open a chilled bottle or two of crisp Chilean Sauvignon Blanc, ideally something from a coastal region such as Casablanca, Leyda, San Antonio or Limarí. **San Pedro's 2009 1865 Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc** from Leyda is pungent and serious (90 points; \$19), while **Bodega Renacer's '09 Punto Final Sauvignon Blanc** from Casablanca is fruity, lively and a Best Buy at 88 points and \$12. An Argentine Torrontés such as the always nice **Colomé** from Salta (about \$15) is another option.

Moving on to the sausages, chicken and cooked vegetable dishes, you might want to try a Pinot Noir for its lighter frame and zesty fruit flavors. There aren't that many fine South American Pinots on the market, but two we like are **Bodega Chacra's 2008 Barda** (89 points; \$22) from Argentina's Río Negro region (Patagonia) and the **Montes 2009 Limited Edition** from Casablanca in Chile (89 points; \$20). Both wines deftly blend well-applied oak, spice and floral fruit aromas and flavors.

Finally we suggest honoring the gauchos, chefs and asadors of Argentina by drinking Malbec with your steak. **Viña Alicia's 2007 Paso de Piedra Malbec** (89 points; \$19) hails from the heart of traditional Mendoza, itself the heart of Argentina's winemaking industry. It's a bold, rich type of Malbec with rubbery smokiness that will match up perfectly to your beef. Up the ladder in quality and price is **Viña Alicia's 2006 Brote Negro** (91 points; \$86), a wine that can take you late into the night, while those who prefer a bit more structure and tannins in their main-course red should consider **Bodega Goulart's 2007 The Marshall** (88 points; \$25), an approachable but full-bodied Malbec. And should you want to pay homage to Uruguay, a country often overshadowed by Argentina and Chile but which has a thriving cattle and asado culture of its own, we recommend the **Gimenez Mendez 2008 Identity Cabernet Sauvignon** from the Canelones region (87 points; \$15) for its clean fruit and smoky spice notes.

**To make garlic chips:** Use a small slicer or mandoline to cut the garlic into very thin chips. Heat the oil in a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat until very hot; meanwhile, line a plate with paper towels. To test the oil temperature, add a slice of garlic. If it sizzles, add the remaining garlic slices and cook until crisp and lightly golden brown, a matter of only a few seconds. Use a flat, slotted skimmer or spatula to keep the slices from sticking together as they cook and transfer garlic to paper towels to drain. You can do this all at once if your pan is large enough, or in batches.

**To make vinaigrette and carrots:** Pour red wine vinegar into a small bowl and whisk in 5 tablespoons of the olive oil. Season to taste with salt and fresh black pepper. Set aside.

Cut the carrots crosswise in half, then cut the halves into thick, rough sticks. Toss in a bowl with 3 tablespoons of olive oil, thyme and salt and pepper to taste.

Heat a large cast-iron skillet over high heat and, working in batches if necessary, add the carrots in a single layer and cook, without turning, until they are charred on the bottom and almost burnt, 3 to 5 minutes. Turn with a spatula and cook on the other side for 2 to 3 minutes more, adjusting the heat as necessary, until the carrots are crunchy on the outside but tender within. Transfer carrots to a tray.

Meanwhile, on a large platter combine the parsley and arugula, and toss lightly with half the vinaigrette. Place the carrots on top.

Reheat the skillet to high heat and coat with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Immediately add the goat cheese slices—be careful, as the oil may spatter. As soon as the cheese rounds blacken on the bottom, remove with a thin spatula and invert onto carrots. Toss the garlic chips over the carrots and greens, then drizzle with any remaining vinaigrette. *Serves 8.*

## Caramelized Endives with Vinegar

1 cup red wine vinegar  
 8 medium endives, cleaned and trimmed  
 ½ cup sugar

Heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Meanwhile, pour the vinegar into a shallow bowl. Cut the endives lengthwise in half, then dip the cut sides in the vinegar to coat. Reserve the vinegar.

Sprinkle sugar evenly over the surface of the hot pan, and when the sugar begins to melt place the endive halves cut side down on the hot surface and do not move for 5 minutes. The sugar will bubble and caramelize, but if it begins to burn lower the heat immediately. When the endive halves are nicely caramelized on the cut side, turn them over and pour the remaining vinegar around them (but not over them) and cook for about 3 more minutes, until they are tender and glazed. *Note:* after removing endives and any liquid to a bowl or platter for serving, douse the still-hot pan with hot water and scrape to prevent the sugar from hardening. This will make cleaning much easier. *Serves 8.*



# Gruppo La-Vis

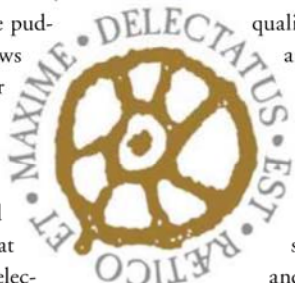
## A Leading Italian Wine Group Focuses on Signature Expressions of Territory

**N**estled between the towering peaks of the Dolomites, Gruppo La-Vis is among the most important and impactful wine groups in Italy. Based on the cooperative model, La Vis is an extraordinary example of team effort: 1,500 families collectively farm 3,600 acres (1,450 hectares) of vines spread across the beautifully mountainous regions of Trentino and Alto Adige. Despite this modern, unified approach, the many generations of farmers who make up this dynamic enterprise have never lost sight of the two principles that inspired the winery's foundation back in 1858 (it became a co-op in 1948): Tradition and territory.

Those may sound like easy words, but at Gruppo La-Vis the proof is in the pudding. This collective heritage allows for flexibility and a potential for growth that other wineries do not enjoy. Because each family runs its own small parcel, organic and boutique farming is practiced on a micro level. Winemakers at La Vis can choose from a wide selection of vineyard crus to express an individual territory: There are high altitude vineyards for crisp, aromatic whites and mineral rich soils for structured reds. These variables craft



La Vis CEO Fausto Peratoner (left) and Eberhard Tamm, President – Ethica Wines North America



quality wines such as the Chardonnay and Müller Thurgau wines that La Vis is celebrated for today.

The group's corporate body can focus on research and growth. In recent years, Gruppo La-Vis has acquired brands including the sparkling house Cesarini Sforza and two estates in Tuscany, Villa Cafaggio and Poggio Morino. "We've taken great care to leave each winery with its own identity, personality and authenticity," says Gruppo La-Vis CEO Fausto Peratoner. The group

also includes a successful apple cooperative and runs the Maso Franch hotel and gourmet restaurant (that was recently voted among Italy's top 100 restaurants).

"Our commitment is to regional typicity and local wine traditions whether it be in Trentino, in Tuscany or in any of the other regions we operate in," says Peratoner. Here is a detailed look at the holding of Gruppo La-Vis.

### ESTATE DIVISION



**Cantina La Vis:** A unified network of growers produce food-friendly wines under the **Simboli** brand (Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Pinot Nero) and the high end **Ritratti** line (Müller Thurgau, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon). Red and white **Intaglio** blends are designed for an international palate.



**Valle di Cembra:** These wines express a specific territory, the Cembra Valley in eastern Trentino, with vines planted as high as 2,800 feet (850 meters) above sea level. Cool climate white wines such as Müller Thurgau represent 80 percent of production.



**Cesarini Sforza:** Founded in 1974, this celebrated winery produces elegant sparkling wines made in the Metodo Classico from Chardonnay and Pinot Nero and less formal Metodo Charmat sparklers.



**Villa Cafaggio:** This prestigious Tuscan estate delivers Chianti Classico and super Tuscan wines San Martino and Cortaccio. The 170-acre (70-hectare) vineyard is located in the prized "Conca d'Oro," one of Italy's most acclaimed vineyards.



**Poggio Morino:** Located in the up-and-coming wine region of Maremma in southern Tuscany, this 220-acre (90-hectare) estate offers Vermentino and Morellino di Scansano.

### CUSTOM BRAND DIVISION



**Casa Girelli:** Includes a line of organic wines from Sicily that fall under the Lamura brand in addition to Canaletto value wines. This division produces private labels for various customers around the world.



26 GENERATIONS



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MAGAZINE

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# California

## PINOT-CABERNET SHOWDOWN

**N**ot that there needs to be a winner, but these are the sorts of headlines that grab attention, aren't they? In fact, it can conclusively be said that parts of the Golden State favor one or the other without declaring a statewide champion, with Russian River and the Sonoma Coast coming firmly down on the side of Pinot Noir, while Napa and the uplands of interior Sonoma favor Cabernet Sauvignon.

In this issue of our Buying Guide, Oakland-based Contributing Editor Steve Heimoff loads up on high-scoring wines from both regions and both grape varieties. Top Pinots include offerings from Lynmar and Fulcrum, while Roessler shows that it's possible to specialize in the grape, rather than a place. Jess Jackson's Stonestreet label headlines this month's bevy of bruising Cabernets, which also includes offerings from Alexander Valley Vineyards and Goldschmidt (also sourcing fruit from the Alexander Valley).

If you're looking for more variety in your Cali-

fornia red wines, you'll have to visit our online Buying Guide at [buyingguide.winemag.com](http://buyingguide.winemag.com), where Heimoff's September reviews cover Grenache, Syrah, Petite Syrah, Petit Verdot, Zinfandel and more.

In print, this month also features the mouth-watering Barberas and Dolcettos that Italian Editor Monica Lerner so lovingly describes in her cover story, "Affordable Italy," starting on page 36. Because of their accessible tannins, bold fruit and affordable prices, these underappreciated wines fit naturally into everyday life, not only in their native Piedmont, but also right here in the United States.

For more everyday pleasures, check out our reviews of Provence rosés, which rarely top the \$20 mark, 35 Best Buys from Chile (plus some other great values) and a number of bargains from Australia and South Africa. Proof that as the summer winds down, there's every reason to speed up your wine buying. Cheers!

—JOE CZERWINSKI

## CALIFORNIA RED WINES

### PINOT NOIR

#### 97 Lynmar 2007 Five Sisters Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$100.

This important Pinot Noir is expensive, but it is absolutely worth a search. It's not a single-vineyard wine, but a blend of various blocks from the cooler southern part of the valley. Oak, to the tune of 70% new, is very strong in char and vanilla, but way stronger is the fruit itself, which is exemplary and stunning. Raspberries, cherries and strawberries just begin to describe it, with all sorts of spice and earth complexities. Stuns with purity, complexity and sheer delicious power. Great now, and will easily develop over the next 6–8 years. —S.H.

#### 95 Fulcrum 2008 Gap's Crown Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$52.

Big and powerful, but nuanced despite its size. It's a dark, extracted wine, filled with wild

cherry, raspberry, currant and sandalwood flavors, as well as exotic notes of forest balsam, grilled mushrooms, tamari and dusty Indian spices. Super-complex, it changes with every sip, and should change interestingly over the next six years. The vineyard is in the Petaluma Gap, and argues strongly for that region's future. —S.H.

#### 94 Fulcrum 2008 Tina Marie Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$48.

This is a wonderfully rich, seductive Pinot Noir. It has the lushness and complexity you want in a fine California bottling, with a silky texture and crisp acidity. The flavors are very complex, ranging from raspberry and cherry tart, cola and exotic rosehip tea to sandalwood, finishing with a flourish of spice. Lots of new oak, but it's perfectly in keeping with the wine's volume. —S.H.

#### 94 Native 9 2008 Rancho Ontiveros Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$55.

Talk about sensuous! This one's sheer silk and satin, a voluptuous wine that seduces the senses. Beyond the fabulous texture



#### 96 Legacy 2006 Red Wine (Alexander Valley); \$75.

Hard to exaggerate the beauty of this mountain-grown wine, which is based on Cabernet Sauvignon but contains the other four classic Bordeaux varieties. Although it's very tannic, those tannins are remarkably soft. Nearly all-new oak provides a framework of smoky caramel, delicious enough, but just an accompaniment to the blackberries, black currants, cherries and dark chocolate. A fantastic wine for drinking now, and should last for many years in the cellar.



#### 96 Stonestreet 2006 Christopher's Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$100.

Hard mountain tannins characterize this Cab, which was grown above 2,000 feet in the Mayacamas. It's hugely deep in blackberries and black currants, with notes of dark chocolate and violets. Meanwhile, 100% new French oak adds an elaborate layer of smoky caramel and char that's entirely in keeping with the wine's volume. Impressive and flashy, but immature, this wine requires cellaring. Best 2012–2018. **Cellar Selection.**

#### 95 Fulcrum 2008 Gap's Crown Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$52.

Big and powerful, but nuanced despite its size. It's a dark, extracted wine, filled with wild cherry, raspberry, currant and sandalwood flavors, as well as exotic notes of forest balsam, grilled mushrooms, tamari and dusty Indian spices. Super-complex, it changes with every sip, and should change interestingly over the next six years. The vineyard is in the Petaluma Gap, and argues strongly for that region's future.

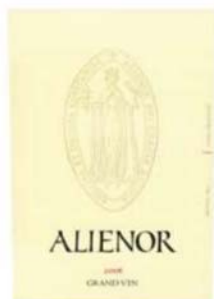


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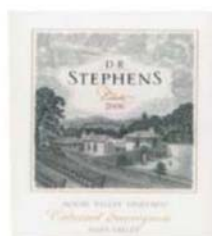
**95 Schramsberg 2005 Brut (Sonoma Coast); \$70.** A brilliant brut, comprised of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. It displays the qualities of dryness and yeastiness, with complex flavors of limes, vanilla and a touch of raspberry. The mousse is very fine, while the acidity is extraordinarily clean and brisk. Beautiful now, and should age for many years.



**94 Alienor 2006 Grand Vin (Lake County); \$65.** A beautiful wine that will redefine the way you view Lake County. Mostly Merlot, with a drop of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, it's extraordinarily rich and

refined in the mouth, a lovely wine to drink now. Shows new oak-inspired raspberry, cherry, red currant and Indian spice flavors that linger into a long finish.

**94 àMaurice 2007 Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$35.** This vintage has the Horiuchi artist label. Another glorious wine from the 2007 vintage, full and forward, packed with plum and purple fruits. Sweet tobacco and baking spices lead into a lush, fruit-loaded core, ripe with berries and plums. The finish—thick and textural and darkly chocolaty—wraps around polished, elegant tannins.



**94 D.R. Stephens 2006 Estate Moose Valley Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$125.** Too young for drinking now, or anytime soon for that matter. It's all primary blackberry and currant fruit, new oak and tannins. But there's a dramatic quality to the structure, a purity of parts that suggests the cellar. There are waves of licorice, mocha and buttered cinnamon toast, with everything vying for supremacy. Let all the elements battle it out for a good six years. This wine should age gracefully through 2015, at least. *Cellar Selection.*



**94 De Sante 2006 Oakville Terraces Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$70.** A terrific Cabernet marked by the superbly ripe, fine tannins and classic blackberry and black currant fruit Napa so routinely delivers. Fully dry, it feels rich and full-bodied and important in the mouth, a wine to drink with fine foods and linger over as it breathes in the glass. Good now, after a brief decant.



**94 Esoterica by Kent Rasmussen 2007 Chavez-Leeds Vineyard Petite Sirah (Rutherford); \$40.** Very dry and tannic, as Petite Sirah should be. But unlike many "Pets," it's also balanced and elegant. The official alcohol is only 13.5%, yet there's not a trace of greenness. In fact, the wine, which has plenty of French oak, is quite rich in blackberry and black currant flavors. Really a superb example, a Petite Sirah for Cabernet fans. Should evolve interestingly for many years. *Editors' Choice.*

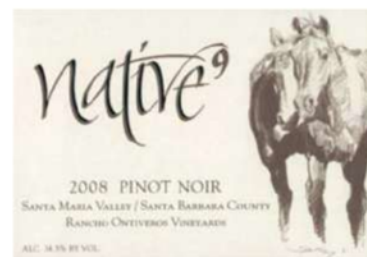


**94 Hunnicutt 2006 9-3-5 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$85.** Quite a good, distinguished Cabernet. It's rich and robust, with explosive blackberry and currant flavors, liberally coated with smoky oak, that finish in a swirl of chocolate. Most exquisite are the tannins, so

pure and refined. The name refers to the number of barrels in the blend, which comes from St. Helena, Rutherford and Spring Mountain.



**94 Hunnicutt 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$35.** A beautiful Chardonnay for drinking now. It's dry and crisp, with pineapple, peach and pear flavors accented with vanilla oak and creaminess from lees aging. Despite the richness, there's a firm minerality, a tang of steel that makes the wine bracing. The grapes are from a vineyard in the southerly, cool Coombsville area, an area that needs its own appellation. *Editors' Choice.*



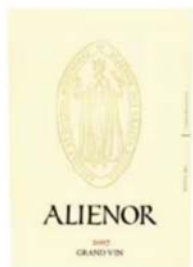
**94 Native 9 2008 Rancho Ontiveros Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$55.** Talk about sensuous! This one's sheer silk and satin, a voluptuous wine that seduces the senses. Beyond the fabulous texture is a complex structure and tiers of flavors, such as fresh wild cherries and raspberries, bacon, black pepper and lots of sweet, smoky new oak. An absolutely gorgeous wine that should age for 6–8 years.





**94 Notre Vin 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); \$150.**

Mostly Cabernet, with a small percentage of the other Bordeaux varieties, this is a very rich, dramatically layered wine. It's notable for both its intensely smooth tannins and the lush fruit, which suggests waves of raspberries, cherries, red currants, licorice, rose petals and oak, courtesy of 100% new French barrels. Yet there's an underlying minerality that gives firmness and grounding. Feels ultrarich on the palate now, and should ride out the next decade with ease.



**93 Alienor 2007 Grand Vin (Lake County); \$65.**

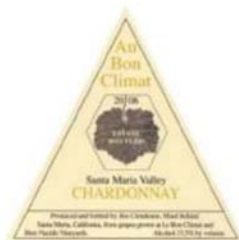
Tasted beside the wonderful 2006, this Bordeaux blend is considerably more tannic and aloof. Almost equal parts Merlot and Cabernet

Franc, it's very deeply flavored in black and red currants, licorice and dusty Asian spices, while lots of new French oak adds a sturdy framework. Seems an obvious candidate for the cellar, and should blossom after 2011. **Cellar Selection.**



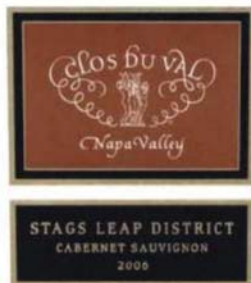
**93 Alta Maria 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$25.**

This is quite a nobly structured Pinot Noir. It's tempting to describe it as thin, because it trades opulence for dryness and a certain spicy minerality. But that would seriously underestimate its considerable appeal, not to mention the subtle hints of wild cherries and raspberries. The more you sip, the more you like it. At this price, a terrific value. **Editors' Choice.**



**93 Au Bon Climat 2006 Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$35.**

Extremely rich and ripe, with tremendous pineapple, pear, mango and white flower flavors that have been liberally oaked. Shows a touch of bitterness in the finish, which is probably the result of its age. Still, it's a flamboyant, impressive Chardonnay, like a magnificent old tapestry that's fraying a bit around the edges.



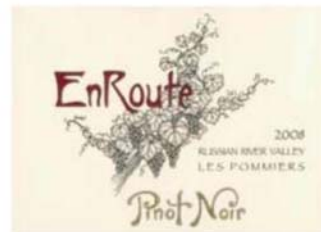
**93 Clos du Val 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$75.**

Lots to admire in this Cab. It's bone dry and rich in blackberry and cedar flavors, with overtones of mocha, anise and toast, and is very tannic. Clearly made in a leaner style than today's high-alcohol cult style, it trades some richness for elegance and finesse. This is a wine that puts its bet on cellaring. Try after 2013. **Cellar Selection.**



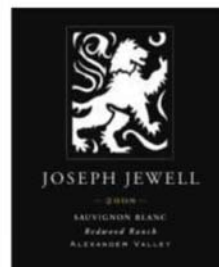
**93 Conspire 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Rutherford); \$28.**

A beautiful, fancy Sauvignon Blanc, crisp and dry and complex. If you're looking for a California white to drink with a perfect roast chicken, it's a fine choice. Shows ripe, lush citrus, tropical fruit, peach, mineral and white flower flavors, finished with dusty cinnamon spices. **Editors' Choice.**



**93 EnRoute 2008 Les Pommiers Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$50.**

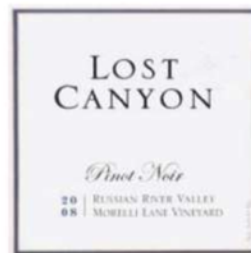
This is a very rich, ripe, flamboyant Pinot, made in the lush California style. It's flashy in complex tiers of raspberries, cherries, red currants, licorice, cocoa and cinnamon spice, yet is silky and dry. The fruit comes from Sonoma Coast, Green Valley and the Middle Reach. An impressive followup to the inaugural '07, and a bottling to watch.



**93 Joseph Jewell 2008 Redwood Ranch Sauvignon Blanc (Alexander Valley); \$24.**

Jewell threads the needle where so many others fail with this dry, elegant Sauvignon Blanc. Does

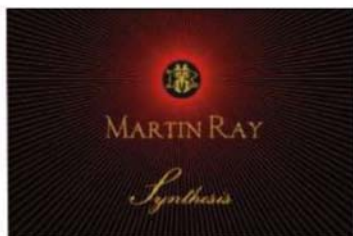
exactly what it should, providing a mouthwateringly crisp white wine that scours and cleanses the palate. The flavors are of limes, lemons, grapefruits, wildflowers and stony, tangy minerals. Really a brilliant wine, among the best of its class. **Editors' Choice.**



**93 Lost Canyon 2008 Morelli Lane Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$42.**

A beautiful Pinot Noir, although it's a bit brusque in acidity. Still, it's enormously rich and dry, with long-lasting flavors of raspberry tart and cherry-cinnamon granola. Give it a brief decant, and drink with rich, umami-inspired fare, like teriyaki salmon or cured meats.

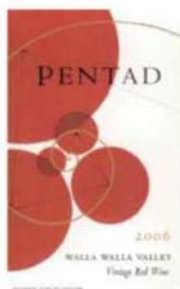




**93 Martin Ray 2006 Synthesis Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$75.** This is a reserve-style wine crafted from lots sourced from some of the winery's Napa mountain properties. It's not showing all that well now, due to hard, jagged tannins. Yet there are promising signs. The oak already is marrying the fruit, resulting in a seamless, smoky sweetness, and the tannins are entirely ripe. Should develop well over the next 6–8 years, possibly longer. **Cellar Selection.**



**93 Notre Vin 2006 Clos Madeleine Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$90.** This is a unique Pinot Noir, different from almost everything else out there. Sourced from a vineyard in the Petaluma Gap region (perhaps a future AVA), it's bone dry, moderate in alcohol, and tannic. It has lighter, leaner flavors than most Pinots, with the fruit accompanied by herbs, minerals, flowers and mushrooms. Fans of super-fruity Pinots will find it unrich, but Burgundy lovers may think of Pommard. It will be fascinating to track this wine's progress.



**93 Seven Hills 2006 Pentad Red Wine (Walla Walla); \$50.** Dark, bold, and full-bodied, this is the perfect embodiment of power and breed in a full-on (five grape) Bordeaux blend. Boysenberry, cassis, plenty of acidity—the nose promises a great deal, though it is reticent in the mouth, and fairly acidic. This is a wine to lay down and enjoy in a decade. **Cellar Selection.**



**93 William Hill Estate 2007 Meritage (Napa Valley); \$125.** Needs time in the cellar, as it's really tough in tannins now. Feels hard and sandpapery and raspily dry. Deep down inside is a molten core of ripe blackberries and black currants, with lots of new, smoky oak. Seems to be your classically ageable Napa red. Give it until at least 2013, and it could surprise and delight for many years beyond. **Cellar Selection.**



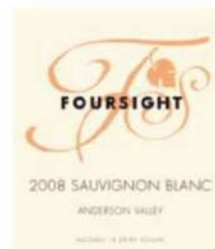
**93 Zaca Mesa 2007 Eight Barrel Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$38.** Profoundly rich, offering massive blackberry, currant, chocolate, bacon and spice flavors that are liberally oaked. A fine structure provides needed balance, with strong, finely ground tannins and brisk acidity cleansing the palate. Young now, and should develop for the next six years.



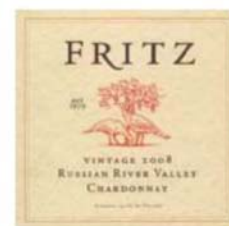
**92 Arbor Crest 2007 Stillwater Creek Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$25.** A single vineyard, 100% varietal Cabernet Sauvignon, this is deep, dark, dense, chewy and tannic. Yet it still captures some delicate floral aromas as well as smoke and rock and black fruits. You go from flower to fruit to earth and black olive in a rush of full-bodied flavor. **Cellar Selection.**



**92 Dry Creek Vineyard 2006 The Mariner (Dry Creek Valley); \$40.** Shows the edgy tannins that Dry Creek red wines invariably display, with a sandpapery texture. That makes the wine, which is a Bordeaux blend of five varieties, a little rustic. But the dryness and bite are a nice alternative to the riper, softer Napa style, and more versatile at the table. Good now, and should slowly develop in the bottle for years.



**92 Foursight 2008 Charles Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Anderson Valley); \$20.** Shows great acidity that really gets the tastebuds whistling, and also deep, complex varietal flavors of Meyer lemons, limes and sweet vanilla, with a green grass component in the background. Very fine and dry, an elegant, sophisticated Sauvignon Blanc of great integrity. **Editors' Choice.**



**92 Fritz 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$25.** Really delicious, a rich, opulent wine that beguiles from first sip to last. It's sweetly caramelized and vanilla-oaky, with crisp acidity brightening ultraripe flavors of pineapples, golden mangoes and buttered toast.





**92 Gustafson Family 2007 Dry Creek Mountain Vineyard Petite Sirah (Dry Creek Valley); \$28.** Somewhat crude and angular now, but then again, it's Petite Sirah, and mountain-grown at that. Shows considerable tannins and fresh acidity, with compact flavors of wild black and blue berries, licorice, currants and peppery spices, finished with a flourish of dark chocolate. A very fine wine that needs time. Better after 2012. *Cellar Selection.*



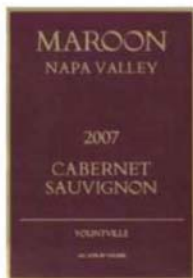
**92 Gustafson Family 2007 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$36.** Made in a superripe, high-alcohol style, this Zin may be an acquired taste, but if you like this approach, it's a sensation. Dry, soft and a little hot, it shows massive blackberry tart, black cherry pie, blueberry jam, chocolate, anise, pepper and Indian spice flavors. Almost Port-like, but never loses essential control, and a fine example of Dry Creek.



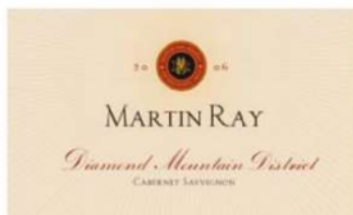
**92 Iron Horse 2008 Native Yeast Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$46.** This is a very rich Chardonnay. It has complex, lush flavors of pineapples, lemons, limes, oranges and the smoky vanilla notes from 100% new oak. High acidity fortunately provides crisp balance. Almost too much of a good thing, it calls for equally rich fare, such as lobster or Ahi tuna tartare.



**92 Kent Rasmussen 2007 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$40.** An entirely satisfying Pinot Noir that meets all the variety's basic requirements. It's dry, crisp and silky in texture, with oak-nuanced flavors of raspberries, cinnamon and mocha. Drink now in its flamboyant youth.



**92 Maroon 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Yountville); \$42.** This Cab is drinking very dry, tannic and austere in its youth. It really needs time in the cellar to soften and throw some sediment, and allow the heart of black currants and dark chocolate to emerge. Should begin to show interest after 2013. *Cellar Selection.*



**92 Martin Ray 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain); \$50.** A fine, fancy Cabernet. It shows Diamond Mountain's famously hard tannins, but they're so finely ground, the wine is actually drinkable now, with a brief decant. It's entirely dry, with complex waves of blackberries, cherries, currants, violets, mocha, minerals and, of course, plenty of sweet smoky oak.



**92 Martin Ray 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$45.** A beautiful wine for drinking now, although it will take a few years in the cellar. Dry and soft, it offers appealing, complex flavors of blackberries, cherries, anise, mocha and sweet smoky oak, wrapped into firm but fine tannins. Gets more interesting as it airs and warms in the glass.



**92 Meander 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$65.** Made in a drier, more elegant style than many other Napa Cabs, this polished bottling can be described as Bordeaux-esque. Its blackberry and currant flavors are grounded in a cedary structure of earth and herbs. Great for a wine list. Drink this fine wine now and through 2014.



**92 Notre Vin 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé (Howell Mountain); \$24.** A very rich blush wine made from the same Cabernet grapes that go into the winery's expensive dry table wine. It's silky and wonderfully crisp, with deep flavors of raspberries, rose petals and vanilla spice. Wonderful with mushroom risotto, or with little puff pastry appetizers. *Editors' Choice.*

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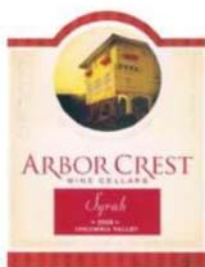
**92 Notre Vin 2006 Cuvee l'Etrier Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$75.** There's a beautiful wine in this Cabernet blend, which was grown at the foot of Howell Mountain. But it's not showing its best now. Just too tannic, and the fruity flavors are all primary and unintegrated with the new oak barrels. With a wealth of raspberries, cherries and currants, it should begin to come into its own after 2013. **Cellar Selection.**



**92 Patz & Hall 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$35.** This is an austere Chardonnay whose minerality and acidity star. That's not to say it's not fruity. It has pineapple and green apple flavors, with oak and lees adding richer complexities. Still, it's a firm, Chablis-style wine, and a very good one that defines the elegant sleekness of the Sonoma Coast.



**92 Zaca Mesa 2007 Roussanne (Santa Ynez Valley); \$25.** Bone dry, ultra-crisp in acidity, and lean in mineral flavors, this barrel-fermented, lees-aged Roussanne is the opposite of rich. But it's enormously elegant, and its leanness contains subtle hints of Meyer lemons, grapefruits, toast, yeast and cold, hard steel. A sommelier's dream for pairing with very complex dishes.



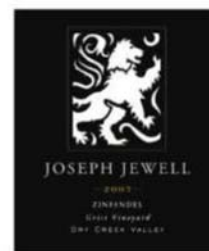
**91 Arbor Crest 2008 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$20.** Stillwater Creek, Conner Lee and Bacchus vineyards provided the fruit for this young, sappy and rich Syrah. It captures the varietal character of the grape, especially as expressed in Washington State. Inviting aromas of berries and chocolate, bright and fresh, lead into brambly red fruits, umami-soaked mushrooms and moist earth.



**91 Iron Horse 2008 Rued Clone Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$46.** Lots of crisp, citrusy acidity in this wine, which brightens the pineapple, orange, lemon and lime flavors. Meanwhile, 100% new oak adds a rich coating of smoky, buttered toast. The wine is dramatic, rather than subtle, and is at its best now.



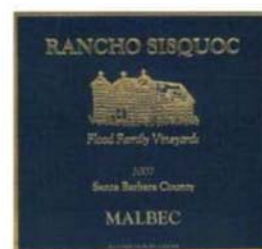
**91 Jim Barry 2004 The Benbournie Cabernet Sauvignon (Clare Valley); \$100.** Jim Barry's luxury Cabernet is amazingly fresh and youthful even six years after the harvest, which bodes well for its longevity. Cassis fruit and barrel char pick up herbal, tobacco-like shadings on the palate, which is full bodied while at the same time showing Cabernet's characteristic restraint. Drink 2014–2025. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. **Cellar Selection.**



**91 Joseph Jewell 2007 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$39.** This rich, spicy Zinfandel defines the Dry Creek style. It's fruit-forward in briary, brambly berry and currant flavors that have hints of anise and chocolate, and is dry, with sturdy tannins and a balancing cut of acidity. Very enticing. Only 150 cases were produced, but it's worth a search.

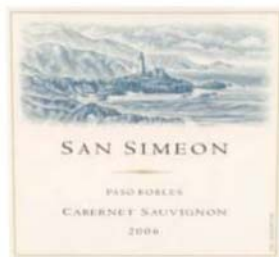


**91 Peter Lehmann 2005 Mentor Cabernet Sauvignon (Barossa Valley); \$38.** The warmth of Barossa shows in this wine, but it remains exceptionally balanced, being ripe without being overly soft, and muscular without being overly firm or crisp. The cassis, mint and chocolate notes finish with a fine dusting of tannins. Drink now–2020. Imported by Hess Collection.

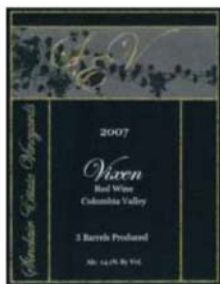


**91 Rancho Sisquoc 2007 Flood Family Vineyards Malbec (Santa Barbara County); \$30.** Very dry and tannic, a somewhat austere wine. But it has a deep core of blackberries and black currants along with a meatiness, like charred beef off the grill. Interesting and complex, for slow sipping with complex beef, pork and lamb dishes.





**91 San Simeon 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$24.** A really good Cabernet that compares favorably against far more expensive Napa Valley bottlings. The wine is drily elegant and complex, and the blackberry, blueberry and currant flavors are balanced with earthy notes of herbs and spices.



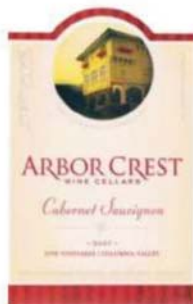
**91 Sinclair Estate Vineyards 2007 Vixen Red (Columbia Valley); \$45.** This captivating wine treads the line between Rhône and Bordeaux. A splash of Cabernet, though just a fraction of the blend, stands out. The wine has depth and persistence, and the mix of grapes works well, showing brambly red fruits, like a Zin, spice and pepper, like Syrah, and some herbal and leafy tobacco in the finish. Complex, unique and quite appealing. **Editors' Choice.**



**91 Yalumba 2006 Menzies The Cigar Cabernet Sauvignon (Coonawarra); \$25.** Slightly minty on the nose, balanced by bold cassis fruit, plenty of weight and rich tannins that give the wine an almost chewy texture. Long, firm and a touch warm on the finish; drink now–2020. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. **Editors' Choice.**



**91 Zaca Mesa 2006 Syrah (Santa Ynez Valley); \$23.** A beautiful wine. If more Syrahs were like this, especially at this price, more people would buy them. It's dry and smoothly tannic, with rich flavors of blackberries, bacon, chocolate and peppery spices. Try as an alternative to Zaca Mesa's much more expensive single vineyard and reserve Syrahs. It's almost as good. **Editors' Choice.**



**90 Arbor Crest 2007 Five Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$18.** Assertive, tannic, and earthy, this includes generous and pretty plum and black cherry fruit in the core. A nice mix of tart, ripe fruit with the interesting flavor components of leaf and herb, olive and licorice, that extend the finish and put a frame around the fruit.



**90 Château de Léoubé 2009 Secret de Léoubé Rosé (Côte de Provence); \$24.** The attractive presentation, with handwriting directly on to the bottle, is followed by an equally attractive wine, ripe and full in character, but balanced with good acidity. There is a final vanilla burst. Imported by Jordan Imports.



**90 Dezzani 2007 La Luna e Le Stelle (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$19.** Chocolate, coffee and espresso come to life thanks to the solid base of natural fruit that keeps the wine lively and fresh. Fruit and oak-related aromas work well together and give the wine brightness, softness and a velvety texture. Imported by Misa Imports.



**90 Goyette 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$19.** This is a smooth, rich and very drinkable Cabernet Sauvignon. It shows ripely classic flavors of blackberries, black currants, minerals and cedar. The tannins are brisk and furry, but the wine doesn't seem like a longterm ager. Good now and through 2014. **Editors' Choice.**



**90 Gustafson Family 2007 Watchtower Vineyard Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Dry Creek Valley); \$45.** This rich, fruity Cabernet comes from one of the higher mountain regions in Dry Creek Valley. It's enormously concentrated in blackberry, black currant and oak flavors, with the briary, peppery note so often found in Dry Creek reds. Fairly tannic, it leaves a trail of astringency after you swallow. Good, if a little rustic. Give it three or four years to come around.





**90 Iron Horse 2008 Corral Vineyard Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$46.**

A very good Chardonnay, fancy and elegant, although it's a little sharp in the mouth, and lacks a certain hedonistic appeal, especially at this price. Shows dry, oak-inspired flavors of pineapples, green apples and pears, with a firm minerality.



**90 Iron Horse 2008 Estate Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$27.** Very forward in fruit, offering a powerful wave of pineapples, oranges, lemons, limes and peaches. Fortunately, all this richness is dry, and brightened with crisp, tart acidity. Suggests a rich lobster or shrimp risotto.



**90 Iron Horse 2008 Unoaked Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$26.**

There's no oak on this Chardonnay, but it's so rich, you don't even notice. It's all pure, ripe pineapple, orange and lime fruit, accompanied by tart, clean Green Valley acidity. Tremendously versatile with food.

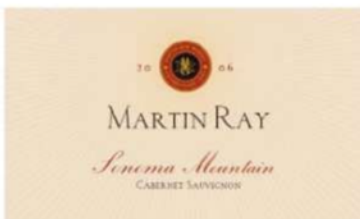


THE COVER DRIVE  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

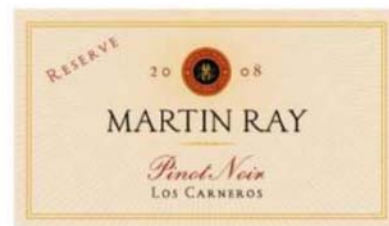
It's on the full-bodied side, with plush, velvety tannins balanced by crisp acids. Drink now–2018. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. **Editors' Choice.**



**90 Lucienne 2007 Lone Oak Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$45.** Pinot Noir doesn't get much riper in fruit than this. It detonates on the palate with a blast of raspberries and red cherries that taste like they were baked into a pie. Oak adds the usual rich notes of vanilla and caramel cream. Not particularly subtle, but decadent and delicious.



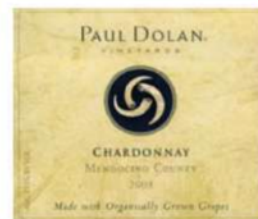
**90 Martin Ray 2006 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Mountain); \$45.** This is a very rich, dry and concentrated Cabernet, but it's also very tannic. The blackberry, blueberry, cherry and currant flavors are wrapped into tight, hard tannins. Should develop in the bottle over the next six years, but it will always be somewhat tannic. Give it a good decant before serving.



**90 Martin Ray 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Los Carneros); \$30.** Textbook cool-climate California Pinot Noir. It's dry, silky, elegant and totally drinkable now, offering complex flavors of cherry, rose petal, cola, orange zest, oaky vanilla and cinnamon spice. Really easy to like this wine.

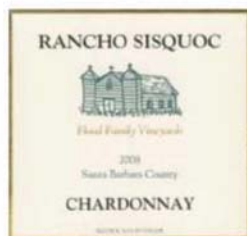


**90 Milbrandt 2006 The Estates Syrah (Wahluk Slope); \$25.** Syrah may well be the standout grape among all that the Milbrandt brothers do well in their 13 vineyards. Here it captures the grape's authentic toasty, meaty, earthy character (well supported with oak) and wraps it around pure black cherry fruit. Supple and long-lasting.

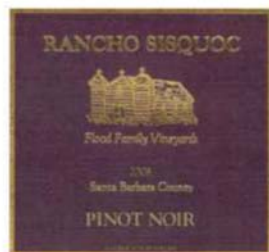


**90 Paul Dolan 2008 Chardonnay (Mendocino County); \$18.** A beautiful Chardonnay notable for its food-friendliness. Strikes a firm path toward dryness and minerality, with suggestions of citrus, peach and vanilla. The racy acidity is wonderful. Defines elegance in Chardonnay, at a good price. **Editors' Choice.**

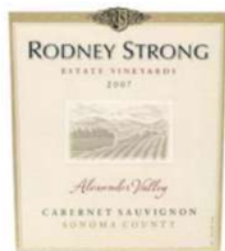




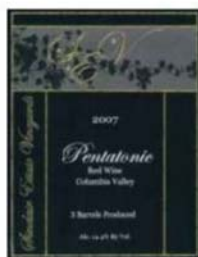
**90 Rancho Sisquoc 2008 Flood Family Vineyards Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$20.** A beautiful Chardonnay at a great price compared to what's out there. Shows brilliantly ripe pineapple, pear and guava flavors, with crisp Central Coast acidity and a bracing minerality. Nice to drink by itself, with shellfish or even with a citrus fruit pastry for dessert. *Editors' Choice.*



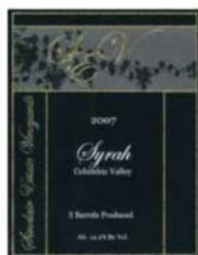
**90 Rancho Sisquoc 2008 Flood Family Vineyards Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County); \$30.** A lovely Pinot made for drinking now. It's softly dry and bright in acidity, offering rich, but subtle, flavors of cherries and raspberries, along with earthier notes of mushrooms. Oak adds a welcome touch of sweet toast and spice.



**90 Rodney Strong 2007 Estate Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$22.** Good price for a Cab this good. It's dry, rich and complex, with blackberry, cherry, currant and herb flavors wrapped into firm, dusty tannins. Not an ager, but beautiful now for its elegance.



**90 Sinclair Estate Vineyards 2007 Pentatonic Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$55.** Pleasingly soft in the mouth, this blend of Cabernet, Merlot, Malbec and Syrah is supple with a mellow fruitiness. Cassis and cherries dominate the midpalate, with new oak barrels filling in the back with toast and butterscotch and vanilla. The alcohol is 14.4%—moderate by current standards—and there's a tickle of tobacco in the finish. This already drinks very well, and can also age over the medium term.



**90 Sinclair Estate Vineyards 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$40.** Roundly fruity, loaded with bright berries, and nicely spiced with herbal (tobacco) highlights. Immediately approachable and nicely structured, this open and generous effort glides into a smooth and chocolaty finish. The tannins have been especially well ripened and polished, so the bright fruit has no sharp edges.



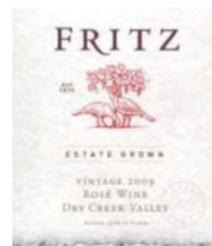
**90 Viña Casablanca 2008 Nimbus Estate Single Vineyard Syrah (Casablanca Valley); \$18.** Three years running and this wine has been impressive since its debut in 2006. The nose is dark and sweet, maybe a touch pasty, but loaded with black fruit aromas. The palate is staunch and secure, with pronounced but proper acidity leading to bright, fresh blackberry and cassis flavors. Toasty and chocolaty on the finish, and impressive as a whole. Drink now through 2011. Imported by Carolina Wine Brands USA.



**90 Yalumba 2008 Hand Picked Botrytis Viognier (Wrattonbully); \$19/375 ml.** Gold in color, with an ebullient nose of spiced melon and sweet flavors of candied pineapple tinged with white pepper and grapefruit. At 12.5% alcohol and 117 g/L residual sugar, it's rich and sweet without being over the top. Drink now. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. *Editors' Choice.*

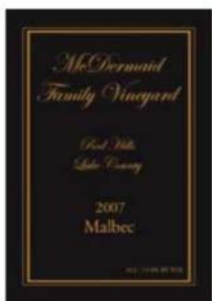


**89 Château de Léoubé 2009 Cuvée B Rosé (Côte de Provence); \$19.** A vanilla-dominated wine, ripe and broad, with a powerful sense of richness. This is certainly for food, missing the freshness but with a great swathe of sweet fruit. Imported by Jordan Imports.

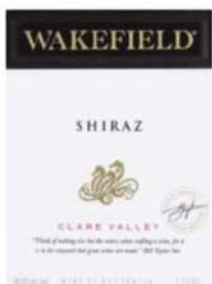


**89 Fritz 2009 Estate Grown Rosé (Dry Creek Valley); \$16.** One of the more successful blush wines out there, this one's crisp and elegant. It has polished flavors of raspberries, rose petals, gingersnap cookie and peppery spices, and the finish is super-dry. Nice with bouillabaisse, or try with cured meat appetizers. *Editors' Choice.*





**89 McDermaid 2007 McDermaid Family Vineyard Malbec (Red Hills Lake County); \$25.** Good price for a dry, lusty Malbec that shows the variety's huge fruit, in a balanced, elegant package. While it's very tannic, the wine is softly drinkable now for its vast wealth of blackberry, black currant, dark chocolate, anise and sandalwood flavors. **Editors' Choice.**



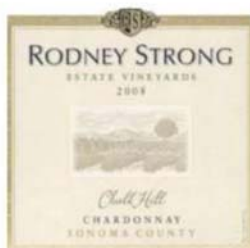
**89 Wakefield Estate 2007 Shiraz (Clare Valley); \$17.** There's a slightly charry, roasted or asphalt top note to this wine's aromas, but the wine's flavors are an intriguing mix of cola, rhubarb and red berries, ending with mouthwatering raspberries coming to the fore. It's a full-bodied, creamy-textured wine that should be enjoyed over the next few years. Imported by Taylors Wines.



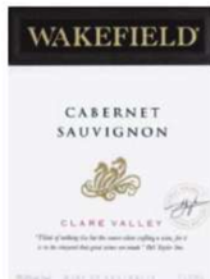
**88 Angeline 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley); \$14.** If there's any oak on this wine, it doesn't show. What does show up is crisply clean acidity and brilliantly ripe pineapple, lime and honeysuckle flavors, brightened with crisp acidity. It's a lovely cocktail sipper, and nice with bruschetta and olive or mushroom tapenade. **Editors' Choice.**



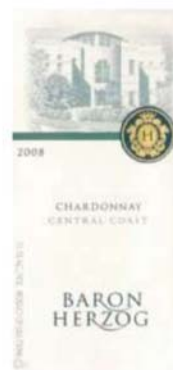
**88 Maddalena 2008 Pinot Grigio (Monterey); \$14.** Stakes out the dry, acidic, minerally side of Pinot Grigio's personality, with citrus fruit and spice flavors and a mouthwatering quality that's exactly what you want in inexpensive bottlings of this variety. Lovely as a cocktail sipper, or with appetizers ranging from puff pastries to bruschetta. **Editors' Choice.**



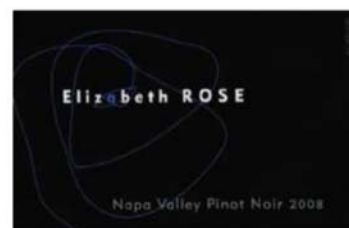
**88 Rodney Strong 2008 Estate Vineyards Chardonnay (Chalk Hill); \$22.** Classy Chardonnay. Shows ripe, savory pineapple, Meyer lemon, lime and mineral flavors, brightened with crisp acidity and enriched with a touch of sweet oak. As rich as it is, it feels elegant and refined in the mouth.



**88 Wakefield Estate 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Clare Valley); \$17.** Surprisingly firm in structure for a wine in this price range, with crisp acids and fine-grained tannins framing flavors of red currants, cinnamon and vanilla. There's a bit of a eucalyptus note as well, which may inspire or turn off some tasters, depending on your tolerance for that quality. Drink now–2020. Imported by Taylors Wines.



**87 Baron Herzog 2008 Chardonnay (Central Coast); \$13.** Made in a food-friendly fashion, this Chard is dry, acidic and minerally. It was obviously picked at lower ripeness, but still shows a warm core of pineapples and green apples. Quite a nice wine for Chardonnay fans to drink with roasted chicken, fleshy fish, or even a white meat such as pork. **Editors' Choice.**



**87 Elizabeth Rose 2008 Pinot Noir (Napa Valley); \$18.** This is a lush, soft and frankly delicious Pinot Noir that delivers far more quality than most Pinots under \$20. It's dry and silky, with flavors of raspberries, cherries, cola, vanilla and spices, and a sweet vanilla veneer of oak.



**87 Paul Dolan 2007 Pinot Noir (Mendocino County); \$30.** A very dry, acidic, rather severe Pinot Noir, made in a tighter, leaner style than most. If you find California Pinot too fruity, you'll like the streamlined raspberry, pepper and mineral flavors.





**87 Santa Carolina 2009 Reserva Pinot Noir (Maule Valley); \$13.** This is yet another wine from the Santa Carolina portfolio that shows vast improvement over previous vintages. The nose offers perfectly nice and easy raspberry and cherry aromas, and there's nothing off about the palate, which gives warm black cherry, plum and buttery flavors that morph into cocoa on the finish. Imported by QW Wine Experts.

## BESTBUYS



**91 Arbor Crest 2007 Four Vineyards Merlot (Columbia Valley); \$15.** This is still a little hard and tight, but shows great ripe red berry fruit and well-balanced tannins. Another Arbor Crest wine with a fine, fragrant bouquet, clean and bursting with fresh fruit scents. It was barrel aged for 20 months in 40% new oak, adding some strength to the tannins and hints of toast to the finish.



**90 Barker's Marque 2009 3 Brooms Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough); \$15.** Pungent and sweaty but nevertheless inviting, this is a walk on the wild side of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. It's full-on boxwood and passionfruit; a potent, weighty wine with a intensely feral quality. Drink now. Imported by International Vines, Inc..

## BESTBUYS



**89 MAN Vintners 2008 Shiraz (Coastal Region); \$11.** Smoke and roobios tea dominate the bouquet, with accents of raspberry and cocoa. The mouth is more of the same with soft notes of black plum guts and berry preserves fleshing it out. The texture is like crushed velvet with assertive tannins and structured acidity. Drinkable now, though could age for another year or two. Imported by Vineyard Brands.



**89 Miguel Torres 2008 Las Mulas Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$13.** A really nice and pure bargain-priced Cabernet, which is still what Chile excels at. The nose offers bold black cherry and a little rubber, while the palate is tight, pure and in great condition. Black fruit flavors with some peppery darkness is what it's all about. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co.



**89 Viña Casablanca 2008 Cefiro Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$10.** A totally correct but well-priced Cab that brings pretty much everything the textbook calls for. The nose features graphite, berry and smoky wood, while the mouthfeel is spot-on and made better by ripe, toasty berry, chocolate and spice flavors. A definite winner at its price point. Imported by Carolina Wine Brands USA.

## BESTBUYS



**88 Bellingham 2008 Citrus Grove Chenin Blanc (Franschhoek); \$13.** Here's a big, rich Chenin boasting developed notes of honeydew, tropical fruit, peach preserves and soft spice. Medium-full in the mouth with good balance and a lengthy finish. The palate shows a hint of petrol along with fresh red apple slices sprinkled with cinnamon and honey. With 2,500 cases imported, drink now and, at this price, often. Imported by Cape Wine Ventures.



**88 Santa Alicia 2009 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$9.** A good deal in value-priced Cabernet. Aromas of mocha, chocolate and ripe berry fruit are well molded, and the palate is warm, rich and full of clean, tasty raspberry and plum fruit accented by another dash of mocha. Fruity and thick, and with a natural oak flavor. Imported by Halby Marketing.



**87 Aresti 2009 Estate Selection Cabernet Sauvignon (Curicó Valley); \$11.** A nice, simple everyday Cabernet is what this is. The nose is sweet and smooth, with slightly candied red fruit aromas. There's some snap and good vibrations on the palate along with flavors of raspberry and red currant. Simple, clean and balanced. Imported by Broad-bent Selections, Inc.



## BESTBUYS



**87 Espiritu de Chile 2009 Carmenère (Central Valley); \$9.** Rich, roasted and defined by rugged black fruit and black olive aromas. Nice acidity renders it fit as opposed to heavy and overextracted. Flavors of wild berry and coffee are good, and the finish shows mint chocolate

chip and snap. Very good for the price. Imported by Cecchetti Racke.



**87 Harbor Town 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough); \$12.** Made in a round, soft style, this is an atypically mouthfilling Sauvignon filled with notes of nectarines, honey and ripe citrus. It's a summer crowd-pleaser for the beach crowd. Imported by Grape Vine Imports.



**87 MontGras 2008 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Colchagua Valley); \$12.** Leather, horse hide, spice, smoked meat and rich berry fruit aromas make for a thick, chunky bouquet. The palate brings full, grating tannins and mouthfilling extract as well as flavors of roasted berry and integrated spice. Herbal and oaky on the finish, with bacon fat as an aftertaste. Imported by Palm Bay International.

## BESTBUYS



**87 MontGras 2009 Reserva Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$12.**

On the nose it's sweet, smooth and seductive, but that's where the sweet nothings end. The palate is super concentrated and intense, with almost overpowering blackberry and boysenberry fruit. A high-octane red if there ever was one, and that's all hammered home on the warm, menthol-laden finish. Imported by Palm Bay International.



**87 O. Fournier 2008 Urban Cabernet Sauvignon (Maule Valley); \$11.**

Floral, fresh and just big enough to make it worth a go. There's a bit of everything to this nice-priced Cab, including leafiness, red fruit, toast, chocolate and cassis.

There's also a bit of heat and burn to the finish, but with food that won't be noticeable. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain.



**87 Oxford Landing 2009 Chardonnay (South Australia); \$8.**

Easy to drink yet a bit interesting as well, this is a top-notch Chardonnay bargain. Features hazelnut and melon on the nose, then adds pineapple and vanilla

to the mix on the palate before ending with a hint of white pepper. Drink now. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc.

## BESTBUYS



**87 Silver Birch 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough); \$12.** The bottle may not be traditional, but what's inside is typical Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, loaded with upfront passion fruit and hints of bell pepper. It fades a bit

quickly on the finish, but it's a plump, medium-bodied example of the type and nicely balanced for the price. Imported by Underdog Wine Merchants.



**86 Aresti 2009 Estate Selection Carmenère (Curicó Valley); \$11.**

Forestry, earthy aromas are dark and dusty, and the palate is mammoth and doesn't hold much back. The flavors of blackberry and black currant are deep and rich, and the fruit plays out long and chocolaty on the finish. Simple and steady red wine with plenty of bulk, body and flavor. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc.



**86 Barefoot NV Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$7.**

A terrific buy if you're looking for a bone-dry, crisply acidic and mineral Sauvignon Blanc. It shows rewarding flavors of lemons, limes, spices and vanilla. Very clean and nice, and easy to find, with 338,000 cases produced.



## BESTBUYS



**86 Gancia NV Brut (Prosecco); \$11.** This Brut style Prosecco from Gancia (one of the most historic producers of this popular Italian sparkling wine) offers fresh floral aromas backed by drying mineral tones and pulpy notes of peach and apricot. The finish is crisp, cleansing and tonic. Imported by OWS.



**86 Gancia NV Moscato d'Asti; \$11.** Beautifully aromatic Moscato grapes offer loads of honey, sweet peach and passion-fruit on the nose. This is a delicate and feminine wine with soft, foamy bubbles capped by generous fruit flavors and natural sweetness. Imported by OWS.



**86 Rocland Estate 2009 Ass Kisser Chardonnay (South Australia); \$10.** Possessing bold waves of pineapple fruit, this is an intensely flavored Chardonnay at a reasonable price. It's fruity and direct, with clean citrus featuring prominently from start to finish. Imported by Rocland Wine Imports.

## BESTBUYS



**86 Viña Requingua 2008 Puerto Viejo Cabernet Sauvignon (Curicó Valley); \$10.** Rooty and sweet smelling, much like a root beer soda mixed with smoked meats and spice. The flavor profile brings roasted black fruit and hoisin sauce, while the finish is dark and ends with coffee-like bitterness. Good for everyday consumption. Imported by Puerto Viejo Wines.



**86 Viña Requingua 2008 Puerto Viejo Carmenère (Curicó Valley); \$10.** Herbal and slightly volatile on the nose before it settles on meaty, herbal fruit aromas. The palate stores flavors of cocoa, carob, olive and herbal black fruit, and while it shows some stemminess it ends on a firm plane with herbs, toast, earth and pepper. Imported by Puerto Viejo Wines.

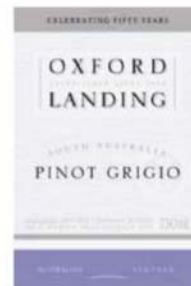


**85 Araldica 2008 Castelvetro Barbera (Piedmont); \$10.** Here's a value wine and a fresh expression of Barbera that can be served with cheeseburgers and fries at an outdoor barbecue. The wine is informal and light and seems to be engineered for immediate consumption. Imported by Vias Imports.

## BESTBUYS



**85 Gancia NV Grand Reale (Piedmont); \$10.** Here is a sweet and fragrant dessert wine with aromas of white flower, honey and stone fruit accented by a slightly drying mineral characteristic. Firm, tonic effervescence keeps the palate refreshed even when paired with whipped cream or creamy fruit desserts. Imported by OWS.



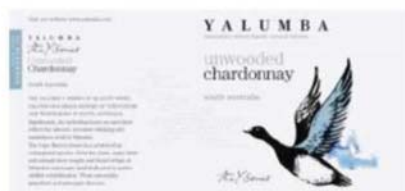
**85 Oxford Landing 2009 Pinot Grigio (South Eastern Australia); \$8.** Slightly chunky in texture, this value-priced Pinot Grigio offers up a mouthful of pulpy apple and pear fruit, but not a lot of nuance or sophistication. Fine as a weeknight apéritif or alongside grilled chicken. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc.



**85 Yalumba 2009 Y Series Sauvignon Blanc (South Australia); \$10.** Stridently herbal on the nose, with flavors that verge on vegetal, this is nonetheless cleanly made, with enough lemongrass and grapefruit aromas and flavors to merit recommendation. Drink it over the next six months or so. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc.



## BESTBUYS



**85 Yalumba 2009 Y Series Unwooded Chardonnay (South Australia); \$10.** Looking for a medium-bodied Chardonnay with a citrusy edge? Look no further. Peach and lime scents ease into tropical fruit while retaining that zestiness on the finish. Drink now. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc.



**84 Barefoot NV Moscato (California); \$7.** With overtly sweet orange and apricot fruit flavors, this qualifies as a dessert wine. The honeyed flavors are fortunately balanced with bright, crisp acidity. Nice this summer on the beach, with fresh fruit and ham sandwiches.



**84 Barefoot NV Pinot Grigio (California); \$7.** Good price for an everyday white wine. The citron, pineapple, apple and honeysuckle flavors are a little sweet, but cleansed with brisk acidity.

## BESTBUYS



**84 Redtree 2009 Moscato (California); \$8.** Honey-sweet in orange and vanilla flavors, this wine has a good backbone of acidity that makes it crisp and clean. Drink it with vanilla desserts or even cheesecake.

## SPIRITS



**93 Four Roses Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (Four Roses Distillery, Lawrenceburg, KY, U.S.) 45% abv, \$35.** Aromas are sweet and fruitcake-like, with faint cigar smoke. Restrained, subtle flavors of orange peel, cinnamon and leather ride a

medium-to-heavy body. The finish is extremely smooth, with a touch of anise.

## BEER



**90 Ass Kisser Kick Ass Double IPA (American Double/Imperial IPA; Ass Kisser Beverage Company brewed by Rahr & Sons Brewery, TX); 9.0% abv, \$9/22 oz.** The inaugural offering from the Ass Kisser line, the Kick Ass Double IPA, indeed kicks some ass. Medium golden brown in color with a tan head that leaves nice thick lacing. For a DIP, the bouquet is surprisingly malty, with strong notes of caramel, raisin challah bread and dried fruits playing alongside assertive hop spice and citrus oils. The medium-full mouthfeel offers a good amount of hop astringency along with pine resin and bitter orange pith flavors. The finish is long and lingering, leaving you perfectly primed for more.

is a complex structure and tiers of flavors, such as fresh wild cherries and raspberries, bacon, black pepper and lots of sweet, smoky new oak. An absolutely gorgeous wine that should age for 6–8 years. —S.H.

**94 Testarossa 2008 Doctor's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$54.** A very finely crafted Pinot Noir, although it's also very young and wants some time in the cellar. Combines great Highlands fruit power and tannic structure with a silky, delicate mouthfeel. Beautiful now for the elaborate raspberry and cherry flavors, elaborated with beautiful oak, but better after 2013. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

**93 Alta Maria 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley); \$25.** This is quite a nobly structured Pinot Noir. It's tempting to describe it as thin, because it trades opulence for dryness and a certain spicy minerality. But that would seriously underestimate its considerable appeal, not to mention the subtle hints of wild cherries and raspberries. The more you sip, the more you like it. At this price, a terrific value. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**93 EnRoute 2008 Les Pommiers Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$50.** This is a very rich, ripe, flamboyant Pinot, made in the lush California style. It's flashy in complex tiers of raspberries, cherries, red currants, licorice, cocoa and cinnamon spice, yet is silky and dry. The fruit comes from Sonoma Coast, Green Valley and the Middle Reach. An impressive followup to the inaugural '07, and a bottling to watch. —S.H.

**93 Lost Canyon 2008 Morelli Lane Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$42.** A beautiful Pinot Noir, although it's a bit brusque in acidity. Still, it's enormously rich and dry, with long-lasting flavors of raspberry tart and cherry-cinnamon granola. Give it a brief decant, and drink with rich, umami-inspired fare, like teriyaki salmon or cured meats. —S.H.

**93 Lynmar 2007 Jenkins Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$70.** Grown in the very cool central-southwestern part of the appellation, by Sebastopol, this Pinot features crisp, mouthwatering acidity. And, in this wonderfully long hangtime vintage, its flavors are extraordinarily



rich and pure, brimming with cherries and raspberries. It shows layers of complexity, yet is too young, with the parts unintegrated. Give it 4–5 years in a cool cellar. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

## 93 Notre Vin 2006 Clos Madeleine Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$90.

This is a unique Pinot Noir, different from almost everything else out there. Sourced from a vineyard in the Petaluma Gap region (perhaps a future AVA), it's bone dry, moderate in alcohol, and tannic. It has lighter, leaner flavors than most Pinots, with the fruit accompanied by herbs, minerals, flowers and mushrooms. Fans of super-fruity Pinots will find it unrich, but Burgundy lovers may think of Pommard. It will be fascinating to track this wine's progress. —S.H.

## 93 Of The Place 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$30.

Opulence, lushness and a silky, seductive texture are what you expect from Pinot Noir, and this one delivers them all. It's bone dry and crisply clean in acidity, with subtle, complex flavors of cherries, raspberries, cola, red currants, licorice, bacon and peppery spices. Easy to drink from the get-go, and gets more interesting as it warms in the glass. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

## 93 Testarossa 2008 Pisoni Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$59.

Shows the volume of this warmish, high mountain vineyard, with enormously ripe flavors of cherries, red currants and red plums, with elaborate sweet oak. Yet it preserves Pinot's silky delicacy. That juggling act, of balancing power with finesse, marks the best Pisoni Pinot Noirs. Fine now, and should slowly develop over the next six years. —S.H.

## 92 Freeman 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$44.

Another in a string of fine Pinots from this producer. Shows real cool coastal influence in the brisk acidity, delicate structure and deep flavors of cherries and cola, which seem to have a long hangtime complexity. Very good, and should develop over the next 5–6 years. —S.H.

## 92 Ghostwriter 2008 Woodruff Family Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$45.

Almost all Pinots grown in these mountains south of San Francisco overlooking Silicon Valley need time in the bottle. This one certainly does. Right now, it's tannic and acidic, and the primary raspberry, cherry and

blood orange flavors are reaching out to—but haven't found, much less embraced—the French oak. Give it a good 4–5 years in the cellar. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

## 92 Kent Rasmussen 2007 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$40.

An entirely satisfying Pinot Noir that meets all the variety's basic requirements. It's dry, crisp and silky in texture, with oak-nuanced flavors of raspberries, cinnamon and mocha. Drink now in its flamboyant youth. —S.H.

## 92 Laetitia 2007 La Colline Pinot Noir (Arroyo Grande Valley); \$60.

A vigorous, masculine Pinot Noir. Dark in color, tannic and acidic, it has the weight of Grenache, although with silkier tannins. The flavors are impressively ripe and deep, suggesting raspberries, cherries, currants and a baked pie crust quality from oak. A bit ponderous now. Give it a good, long decant, or hold for up to six years. —S.H.

## 92 Roessler 2008 La Brisa Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$32.

A fine example of a Sonoma Coast Pinot, marked by bright, cleansing acidity and rich, yet modulated, cherry, raspberry, cola, rhubarb and pomegranate flavors. There's a spicy, silky elegance that makes repeated sips rewarding. Now through 2014. —S.H.

## 92 Roessler 2008 Clos Pepe Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$54.

Shows lots of classy elegance, with brisk acidity and firm minerals and some finely ground tannins that frame the wild cherry, cola and oak flavors. Good now for its flamboyant deliciousness, but really too immature. Give it 3–5 years in the cellar to begin to develop bottle complexity. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

## 91 Carr 2008 Kessler-Haak Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$50.

Like all of Carr's '08 Pinots, this one's marked by tart acidity. It gives a sour cherry candy taste and prickly mouthfeel. But it's quite rich, and as the wine breathes in the glass, its attractions mount. Give it two or three years in the cellar. —S.H.

## 91 Laetitia 2007 La Coupelle Pinot Noir (Arroyo Grande Valley); \$60.

Shows the voluminous fruit and full body that Laetitia Pinots typically possess, with huge, mouthfilling flavors of cherries, raspberries, red currants, cola and sandalwood. Also pretty tannic. But the notable feature is tart acidity. Not a

big problem, but the palate feels it like a bee sting. Best now–2013. —S.H.

## 91 Roessler 2008 Sanford & Benedict Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$54.

Rich in cherry and raspberry pie filling flavors, with red currant, cola and exotic pomegranate notes and a super-spicy finish. Bone dry, this Pinot shows the classy elegance of its vineyard source. On the downside is very tart acidity, as if the wine contained a big squirt of lime juice. Hard to tell where it's going, if anywhere, but nice after decanting with a grilled steak. —S.H.

## 91 Twomey 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$50.

A very fine Pinot Noir that shows deep, impressively ripe flavors of raspberry and cherry tart, red currant, licorice and Asian spices, with a rich coating of smoky oak. It's entirely dry, and has a brisk scour of acidity. Seems best now and for the next few years. —S.H.

## 90 Carr 2008 Turner Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$40.

This has been one of Carr's more successful bottlings, and the '08 is quite a good wine, although not quite up there with the '05. It's very deep in flavor, with lush, impressive notes of cherry pie filling with the smoky-sweet crust and masses of savory Indian spices. The acidity is quite high, maybe a little too much so. —S.H.

## 90 Lucienne 2007 Lone Oak Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$45.

Pinot Noir doesn't get much riper in fruit than this. It detonates on the palate with a blast of raspberries and red cherries that taste like they were baked into a pie. Oak adds the usual rich notes of vanilla and caramel cream. Not particularly subtle, but decadent and delicious. —S.H.

## 90 Martin Ray 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Los Carneros); \$30.

Textbook cool-climate California Pinot Noir. It's dry, silky, elegant and totally drinkable now, offering complex flavors of cherry, rose petal, cola, orange zest, oaky vanilla and cinnamon spice. Really easy to like this wine. —S.H.

## 90 Rancho Sisquoc 2008 Flood Family Vineyards Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County); \$30.

A lovely Pinot made for drinking now. It's softly dry and bright in acidity, offering rich, but subtle, flavors of cherries and raspberries, along with earthier notes of



mushrooms. Oak adds a welcome touch of sweet toast and spice. —S.H.

**90 Roessler 2008 Red Label Pinot Noir (Sonoma County); \$30.** A good buy, compared to Roessler's more expensive bottlings. It's a county-wide blend, and quite a nice one. Crisp, dry and silky, it shows classic varietal flavors of cherries, cola, pomegranates and spices, accented with smoky sandalwood. Drink now. —S.H.

**90 Roessler 2008 Ceremonial Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$45.** A very pretty, polished Pinot Noir, sourced from the cooler, foggier southern part of the valley, near River Road. Shows considerable acidity that stings the palate, but the raspberry, cherry and cola flavors, enhanced with sweet oak, are very rich. Now–2013. —S.H.

**90 Twomey 2008 Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$50.** This is a very nice, classy wine to drink now with a good steak or mushroom risotto or anything friendly to a dry, elegant California Pinot Noir. It's brisk in acidity, with polished raspberry, cherry, red currant, anise and sandalwood flavors. —S.H.

**89 Freeman 2008 Ryo-fu Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$44.** Aggressive now in acidity, this Chardonnay has powerful sour Lifesaver candy flavors of pineapples and stony minerals, with a potent kick from smoky oak. It tastes young and jammy. It's elegant, and changes interestingly as it warms in the glass. —S.H.

**89 La Rochelle 2007 Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Block A Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$50.** A little raw around the edges, lacking the sexy lushness you want in a fine Pinot Noir. Mostly that's a function of high acidity and a touch of minty green. Still, it's a delicious, complex wine, with oaky flavors of raspberries, cherries and Asian spices. Probably best now and for the next five years. —S.H.

**89 Roessler 2008 Griffin's Lair Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$46.** Comes from a little-understood part of the sprawling Sonoma Coast, a place near San Pablo Bay yet to prove itself. There are ripe, rich, young vine flavors of cherry pie and cola, with a very sharp bite of tartness. Think of opulence versus acidity.

Hard to tell which side wins. Drink now, for fresh, jammy fruitiness. —S.H.

**88 La Rochelle 2007 Paraiso Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$50.** A bit too tart, and the cherry flavors have hints of sweetened green tomato pie. It's a very good, drily crisp and interesting wine, but could be a touch lusher, although oak goes a long way to add richness. —S.H.

**88 La Rochelle 2007 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$42.** Tart acidity marks this wine, giving it a tingly palate feeling. But that could go away by summer 2010, when the wine will be fully available. Otherwise, it's silky and very good, with ripe black cherry, currant, cola, orange zest and sandalwood flavors. Now–2013. —S.H.


**88 Lucienne 2007 Doctor's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$38.** Delicious in raspberry and cherry jam flavors, with an elaborate coat of sweet, smoky, caramelized oak. Good acidity and smooth tannins make for fine structure. Could be drier and more complex, but it's a hedonistic Pinot Noir with lots of flash. —S.H.

**88 Phantom Rivers 2007 Wolff Vineyards Pinot Noir (Edna Valley); \$26.** Very rich and forward in fruit, this Pinot's natural raspberry and cherry flavors turns dessert tart decadent as it meets with toasty oak. Yet for all the richness, it finishes bone dry, with scoury Edna Valley tannins. A polished Pinot for drinking now. —S.H.


**87 Domaine Carneros 2008 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$35.** A good Pinot Noir, dry and elegantly structured, with flavors of cherries, currants and oak. Turns a bit sharp as you taste, with a bite of acidity. Will foil well against a juicy steak. The grapes were organically certified. —S.H.

**87 Elizabeth Rose 2008 Pinot Noir (Napa Valley); \$18.** This is a lush, soft and frankly delicious Pinot Noir that delivers far more quality than most Pinots under \$20. It's dry and silky, with flavors of raspberries, cherries, cola, vanilla and spices, and a sweet vanilla veneer of oak. —S.H.

**87 Fulcrum 2008 Hein Vineyard - Hayley Vineyard Pinot Noir**



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**(Anderson Valley); \$52.** Shows the challenges of the 2008 vintage, which was alternately cool, hot and rainy in the North Coast. The wine is very dry and quite acidic. While it shows an elegant structure, it's a bit lacking in richness, and probably is not ageworthy. —S.H.

**87 Ghostwriter 2008 Aptos Creek Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz County); \$45.** Superrich in jammy raspberry, cherry and cola flavors, almost sweet, except it's technically dry. Shows firm acidity and even some dusty tannins, but the fruit is the alpha and omega, dominating everything. Drink now. —S.H.

**87 HKG 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$38.** Good raspberry, cherry, orange tea, Dr. Pepper and Asian spice flavors in this wine, brightened with crisp acidity and wrapped into a silky texture. Seems a bit simple and direct though. Probably best in the next few years. From Hop Kiln. —S.H.

**87 Iron Horse 2008 Estate Pinot Noir (Green Valley); \$50.** Not showing all that well now, with cola, currant, plum and oak flavors that are a little jammy and direct, and marked by dry tannins. It's a good, well-structured wine, though, and could just be going through an awkward phase. —S.H.

**87 La Rochelle 2007 Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$38.** Sweetly caramelized, smoky oak, with all of its vanilla and wood sap flavors, dominates this wine, although it does have a considerable framework of raspberries and cherries. Feels a bit one-dimensional, but it's a pretty Pinot Noir, from a good address. —S.H.

**87 Paul Dolan 2007 Pinot Noir (Mendocino County); \$30.** A very dry, acidic, rather severe Pinot Noir, made in a tighter, leaner style than most. If you find California Pinot too fruity, you'll like the streamlined raspberry, pepper and mineral flavors. —S.H.

**87 Roessler 2008 Blue Jay Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$32.** Dry and very tart in the mouth, with a mouthfeel that remains acidically severe despite rich flavors of cherries, black raspberries and Dr. Pepper cola. There's a nobility of tannins, and Pinot's essential character shows through, but that acidity is pretty strong. Now–2012. —S.H.

**87 Roessler 2008 Gap's Crown Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$46.** Shows the coolness of the vintage with a tartly acidic mouthfeel that gives the cherry and raspberry flavors a sour candy feel. Other flavors include mint and a pleasantly sweet touch of butterscotch from oak. Other than the sharpness, this is a pretty nice Pinot. —S.H.

**87 Twomey 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County); \$50.** A good, polished Pinot for drinking now. It's brisk in acidity and has a hint of green mint, but the raspberry, cherry and cedar flavors are delicious. —S.H.

**87 Twomey 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$50.** A bit too tannic and acidic, with a hard edge that interferes with the palate's enjoyment of the pure, refined raspberry, cherry, cola and sandalwood flavors. A good, distinguished Pinot, but lacks voluptuousness due to the coarseness. Drink now. —S.H.

**86 Carr 2008 The Yard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$45.** Good cherry, red currant and oak flavors in this Pinot, which is totally dry. But it's very acidic, with a scoury mouthfeel, and doesn't seem like it's going anywhere. —S.H.

**86 Carr 2008 Three Vineyards Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$38.** Tart in acidity, and bone dry, this young Pinot has exotic and complex flavors of cola and cherries, with tannins from the bitter skins and a touch of smoky oak. It's very finely constructed, but the tartness is insistent. May mellow in the bottle. —S.H.

**86 Clos du Val 2008 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$30.** This is a good Pinot Noir, but it lacks a certain vitality and complexity. The cherry flavors have an herbal, mushroomy edge. Would score higher if it had greater structural depth. —S.H.

**86 Pennywise 2008 Pinot Noir (California); \$12.** A delicious, easy-drinking Pinot Noir for everyday, at a good price. It has raspberry tutti-fruity flavors with lots of vanilla and spice. —S.H.

**86 Testarossa 2008 Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$59.** Not the most successful Rosella's Pinot ever. The flavors are rich enough, suggesting raspberries, cherries and cola, and the wine is

dry and silky. But there's an acidic sharpness, reminiscent of mint jelly, that deranges the palate. —S.H.

**85 Irony 2008 Pinot Noir (Monterey County); \$15.** Very dry, crisp and elegantly structured, this Pinot Noir can be had at a pretty good price. It has modest flavors of cherries, tobacco and spices, but is a little unripe, with hints of green tomato and white pepper. —S.H.

**85 Rochioli 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$58.** Good, but a little lacking in depth and richness. The cherry, cola and sandalwood flavors are compromised by thinner notes of wintergreen and even a veggie touch. —S.H.

## CABERNETS & BLENDS

**96 Legacy 2006 Red Wine (Alexander Valley); \$75.** Hard to exaggerate the beauty of this mountain-grown wine, which is based on Cabernet Sauvignon but contains the other four classic Bordeaux varieties. Although it's very tannic, those tannins are remarkably soft. Nearly all-new oak provides a framework of smoky caramel, delicious enough, but just an accompaniment to the blackberries, black currants, cherries and dark chocolate. A fantastic wine for drinking now, and should last for many years in the cellar. —S.H.

**96 Stonestreet 2006 Christopher's Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$100.** Hard mountain tannins characterize this Cab, which was grown above 2,000 feet in the Mayacamas. It's hugely deep in blackberries and black currants, with notes of dark chocolate and violets. Meanwhile, 100% new French oak adds an elaborate layer of smoky caramel and char that's entirely in keeping with the wine's volume. Impressive and flashy, but immature, this wine requires cellaring. Best 2012–2018. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**95 Goldschmidt 2007 Vyborny Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$70.** A tremendous Cabernet, pure and refined, and undoubtedly the beneficiary of its great vintage. It's dry and elegant, with the slightly herbal tinge and soft tannins that Alexander Valley invariably lends. Yet the flavor profile is dominated by delicious, oak-inspired blackberries, cherries and currants. Bril-



liant and beautiful, and should develop for many years. —S.H.

**95 Janzen 2007 Cloudy's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$100.** A beautiful, classy Cab, marked by smoky new oak and very ripe blackberry and cassis flavors, with a streak of minerals. The vineyard is in the Vaca Mountains, in the valley's far east. You can taste the sunshine in the wonderful fruitiness, and the tannins are extraordinarily refined, but they're also aggressive. Fine now, with a long decant, but should develop bottle complexity over many years. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**95 Steven Kent 2007 Ghielmetti Vineyard Clone 4 Cabernet Sauvignon (Livermore Valley); \$100.** There's a beautiful wine in here, but it's buried under tannins. Also, the fruit is all primary blackberry, blueberry, raspberry and cherry jam, while the oak stands to the side, insistent in vanilla and toast. Nothing has merged, everything is separated. Yet this is a great wine, easily the greatest Cabernet to emerge from Livermore Valley in memory. Beautiful now, and should develop for a decade. —S.H.

**94 Alienor 2006 Grand Vin (Lake County); \$65.** A beautiful wine that will redefine the way you view Lake County. Mostly Merlot, with a drop of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, it's extraordinarily rich and refined in the mouth, a lovely wine to drink now. Shows new oak-inspired raspberry, cherry, red currant and Indian spice flavors that linger into a long finish. —S.H.

**94 D.R. Stephens 2006 Estate Moose Valley Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$125.** Too young for drinking now, or anytime soon for that matter. It's all primary blackberry and currant fruit, new oak and tannins. But there's a dramatic quality to the structure, a purity of parts that suggests the cellar. There are waves of licorice, mocha and buttered cinnamon toast, with everything vying for supremacy. Let all the elements battle it out for a good six years. This wine should age gracefully through 2015, at least. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**94 De Sante 2006 Oakville Terraces Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$70.** A terrific Cabernet marked by the superbly ripe, fine tannins and classic blackberry

and black currant fruit Napa so routinely delivers. Fully dry, it feels rich and full-bodied and important in the mouth, a wine to drink with fine foods and linger over as it breathes in the glass. Good now, after a brief decant. —S.H.

**94 Hunnicutt 2006 9-3-5 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$85.** Quite a good, distinguished Cabernet. It's rich and robust, with explosive blackberry and currant flavors, liberally coated with smoky oak, that finish in a swirl of chocolate. Most exquisite are the tannins, so pure and refined. The name refers to the number of barrels in the blend, which comes from St. Helena, Rutherford and Spring Mountain. —S.H.

**94 JD 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain); \$40.** A beautiful, ultrafine Cabernet that shows rich blackberry, black currant, violet, cocoa and cedar flavors, and while it has tightly wound mountain tannins, it's entirely approachable now. A great, delicious success that's capable of aging for a good ten years, in a proper cellar. From the Davies family, of Schramsberg. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**94 Notre Vin 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); \$150.** Mostly Cabernet, with a small percentage of the other Bordeaux varieties, this is a very rich, dramatically layered wine. It's notable for both its intensely smooth tannins and the lush fruit, which suggests waves of raspberries, cherries, red currants, licorice, rose petals and oak, courtesy of 100% new French barrels. Yet there's an underlying minerality that gives firmness and grounding. Feels ultrarich on the palate now, and should ride out the next decade with ease. —S.H.

**93 Alienor 2007 Grand Vin (Lake County); \$65.** Tasted beside the wonderful 2006, this Bordeaux blend is considerably more tannic and aloof. Almost equal parts Merlot and Cabernet Franc, it's very deeply flavored in black and red currants, licorice and dusty Asian spices, while lots of new French oak adds a sturdy framework. Seems an obvious candidate for the cellar, and should blossom after 2011. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**93 Clos du Val 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$75.** Lots to admire in this Cab. It's bone dry and rich in blackberry and cedar flavors, with overtones of mocha, anise and toast, and is very tannic.

## CLOUDY BAY twenty five years



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Clearly made in a leaner style than today's high-alcohol cult style, it trades some richness for elegance and finesse. This is a wine that puts its bet on cellaring. Try after 2013. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**93 Goldschmidt 2007 Game Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); \$70.** A very fine Cabernet, although it's tough and young and wants time in the cellar. Strikes you immediately as lush and important, with a fine structure framing ripe flavors of blackberries, black cherries, currants, anise, dark chocolate and sandalwood. Yet there's a juvenile character that, good as it is, promises even better things down the road. Give it until 2013, at least. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**93 Goldschmidt 2006 Vyborny Vineyard Plus Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$150.** You'll want to age this wine for a good 6–8 years, because right now it's rather tough in tannins, and the fruit and oak have not married. Nonetheless it's quite a good wine. Shows complex layers of blackberries, currants and caramelized oak. Lifts Alexander Valley Cabernet above its usual level into noteworthy. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**93 Martin Ray 2006 Synthesis Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$75.** This is a reserve-style wine crafted from lots sourced from some of the winery's Napa mountain properties. It's not showing all that well now, due to hard, jagged tannins. Yet there are promising signs. The oak already is marrying the fruit, resulting in a seamless, smoky sweetness, and the tannins are entirely ripe. Should develop well over the next 6–8 years, possibly longer. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**93 Meander 2006 Morisoli Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$100.** This very fine Cabernet wants a little time in the cellar. Right now, it's tight in tannins, with some acidic bitterness in the finish. The flavors are of black currants and smoky new oak. The Morisoli Vineyard has been home to very good, ageable bottlings from the likes of Sequoia Grove and Elyse, but in the last few years, Meander has expressed its terroir best. Try after 2012. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**93 Selene 2007 Dead Fred Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$50.** The palate can tell a superbly struc-

tured Cabernet from a flawed one, and this Cab shows off its pedigreed origins with flash. Great tannins, fine acidity, fully dry, and with a rich veneer of oak, it has perfectly ripened flavors of blackberries, currants, cherries and dark chocolate. —S.H.

**93 William Hill Estate 2007 Meritage (Napa Valley); \$125.** Needs time in the cellar, as it's really tough in tannins now. Feels hard and sandpapery and raspily dry. Deep down inside is a molten core of ripe blackberries and black currants, with lots of new, smoky oak. Seems to be your classically ageable Napa red. Give it until at least 2013, and it could surprise and delight for many years beyond. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**92 Alexander Valley Vineyards 2006 Cyrus (Alexander Valley); \$55.** Always an interesting wine, and one that's made to drink with food. Dry and balanced, it shows flavors of blackberries, herbs and oak, with a soft, velvety mouthfeel. Made from all five of the traditional Bordeaux varieties, it should evolve over the next 6–8 years. —S.H.

**92 Dry Creek Vineyard 2006 The Mariner (Dry Creek Valley); \$40.** Shows the edgy tannins that Dry Creek red wines invariably display, with a sandpapery texture. That makes the wine, which is a Bordeaux blend of five varieties, a little rustic. But the dryness and bite are a nice alternative to the riper, softer Napa style, and more versatile at the table. Good now, and should slowly develop in the bottle for years. —S.H.

**92 Maroon 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Yountville); \$42.** This Cab is drinking very dry, tannic and austere in its youth. It really needs time in the cellar to soften and throw some sediment, and allow the heart of black currants and dark chocolate to emerge. Should begin to show interest after 2013. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**92 Martin Ray 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain); \$50.** A fine, fancy Cabernet. It shows Diamond Mountain's famously hard tannins, but they're so finely ground, the wine is actually drinkable now, with a brief decant. It's entirely dry, with complex waves of blackberries, cherries, currants, violets, mocha, minerals and, of course, plenty of sweet smoky oak. —S.H.

**92 Martin Ray 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$45.** A beautiful wine for drinking now, although it will take a few years in the cellar. Dry and soft, it offers appealing, complex flavors of blackberries, cherries, anise, mocha and sweet smoky oak, wrapped into firm but fine tannins. Gets more interesting as it airs and warms in the glass. —S.H.

**92 Meander 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$65.** Made in a drier, more elegant style than many other Napa Cabs, this polished bottling can be described as Bordeaux-esque. Its blackberry and currant flavors are grounded in a cedary structure of earth and herbs. Great for a wine list. Drink this fine wine now and through 2014. —S.H.

**92 Notre Vin 2006 Cuvee l'Etrier Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$75.** There's a beautiful wine in this Cabernet blend, which was grown at the foot of Howell Mountain. But it's not showing its best now. Just too tannic, and the fruity flavors are all primary and unintegrated with the new oak barrels. With a wealth of raspberries, cherries and currants, it should begin to come into its own after 2013. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**91 Hunnicutt 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$48.** Rich and ripe, with enormous blackberry, currant, chocolate and cedar flavors, wrapped into firm but smoothly complex tannins. A very good Cab that will develop nuances over the next 4–6 years. —S.H.

**91 Mounts 2007 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon (Dry Creek Valley); \$35.** Shows a distinguished structure and mouthfeel proving that Dry Creek Cabs are really moving forward. Quite different from Napa in the briary, brambly, wild berry flavors, almost like Zinfandel, and the brisk tannins. This food-friendly wine will perform well on a restaurant wine list. —S.H.

**91 San Simeon 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles); \$24.** A really good Cabernet that compares favorably against far more expensive Napa Valley bottlings. The wine is drier, elegant and complex, and the blackberry, blueberry and currant flavors are balanced with earthy notes of herbs and spices. —S.H.

**91 Selene 2005 Chesler (Napa Valley); \$50.** This is an unusual blend of Caber-



net Franc and Merlot. At the age of nearly five years, it's already throwing some sediment, but is still superfruity, offering an explosion of raspberries, cherries and currants. The oak remains integrated, and as a result the wine is jammy and direct. But that's now. It has the inherent sweetness and balance to age for another 4-6 years, so stash it until 2014 and see what happens. —S.H.

**90 Clos du Val 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$35.** A bit burly in tannins, with a dry, sandpapery mouthfeel. But that doesn't stop the blackberry, black cherry and currant fruit from shining through, or put a damper on the sweet, toasty oak notes. Doesn't feel like an ager, so the tannins are here to stay, but a good steak will wrestle them into submission. —S.H.

**90 Goyette 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$19.** This is a smooth, rich and very drinkable Cabernet Sauvignon. It shows ripely classic flavors of blackberries, black currants, minerals and cedar. The tannins are brisk and furry, but the wine doesn't seem like a longterm ager. Good now and through 2014. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**90 Gustafson Family 2007 Watchtower Vineyard Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Dry Creek Valley); \$45.** This rich, fruity Cabernet comes from one of the higher mountain regions in Dry Creek Valley. It's enormously concentrated in blackberry, black currant and oak flavors, with the briary, peppery note so often found in Dry Creek reds. Fairly tannic, it leaves a trail of astringency after you swallow. Good, if a little rustic. Give it three or four years to come around. —S.H.

**90 Happy Canyon Vineyard 2006 Barrack Ten Goal (Santa Ynez Valley); \$60.** One of the more successful Bordeaux-style blends from the Happy Canyon section of the valley, this Cabernet Sauvignon-based wine is complex and layered. The blackberry, black currant and spice flavors have a nice coating of oak, and turn chocolaty-rich on the finish. A bit sharp in acidity, but a real step forward. —S.H.

**90 Martin Ray 2006 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Mountain); \$45.** This is a very rich, dry and concentrated Cabernet, but it's also very tannic. The blackberry, blueberry, cherry and currant flavors are wrapped into tight, hard tannins. Should develop in the

bottle over the next six years, but it will always be somewhat tannic. Give it a good decant before serving. —S.H.

**90 Rodney Strong 2007 Estate Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$22.** Good price for a Cab this good. It's dry, rich and complex, with blackberry, cherry, currant and herb flavors wrapped into firm, dusty tannins. Not an ager, but beautiful now for its elegance. —S.H.

**90 Shafer 2007 One Point Five (Stags Leap District); \$70.** A good, lusty wine, although it's too young now, offering a big mouthful of tannins, acidity and immature fruit. A blend of 99% Cab and 1% Petit Verdot, it's a hard wine, but the flavors are immaculate, suggesting ripe blackberries and currants that veer into a touch of raisin. Give it 4-5 years in the cellar to come around. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

**90 Sodaro 2006 Estate Blend Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$65.** This Bordeaux blend shows an interesting range of fruit flavors and textures from the blend, which includes Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Merlot. The flavors tend toward red fruits, as in cherries and red currants, while the tannins are quite strong. Shows an immaturity now that strongly suggests 5-6 years in the cellar. —S.H.

**89 Ironstone 2006 Reserve Estate Grown Meritage (Sierra Foothills); \$45.** Smells and tastes of a piece, a lush, smooth wine of considerable appeal. Although it's a bit soft and melted, the blend, which is mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, shows delicious blackberry, black currant, licorice, cedar and spice flavors. —S.H.

**89 Martin Ray 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$45.** Pretty sharp in tannins and acids, even for a Stags Leap Cab. Although it has plenty of blackberry, cherry, currant and oak flavors, it's a hard wine. The palate finds so much to like, it wants it to be softer, but it's not, so the gamble is on aging. Try after 2013. —S.H.

**88 D.R. Stephens 2007 D.R. II Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$60.** A solid, good Cabernet, with very ripe, extracted blackberry, blueberry and chocolate flavors, wrapped into firm tannins. It's a little forward and

## THE WINE ENTHUSIAST BUYING GUIDE

The Buying Guide includes ratings and reviews of new releases and selected older wines evaluated by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine's* editors and other qualified tasters. On a regular basis the Buying Guide includes reports on special tastings and the wines of specific producers. Regular contributors to our Buying Guide include Senior Editor/ Tasting Director Joe Czerwinski, Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo, Executive Editor Susan Kostzewa, Contributing Editor Michael Schachner and Contributing Reviewer Jean Reilly in New York, European Editor Roger Voss in Bordeaux, Italian Editor Monica Lamer in Rome, Contributing Editor Steve Heimoff in Oakland and Contributing Editor Paul Gregutt in Seattle. If a wine was evaluated by a single reviewer, that taster's initials appear following the note. When no initials appear, the wine was evaluated by two or more reviewers and the score and tasting note reflect the input of all tasters.

Each review contains a score, the full name of the wine, its suggested national retail price, and a tasting note. If price cannot be confirmed, \$NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for 750-ml bottles unless otherwise indicated.

### TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

Tastings are conducted individually or in a group setting and performed blind or in accordance with accepted industry practices. Price is not a factor in assigning scores. When possible, wines considered flawed or uncanny are retasted.

### ABOUT THE SCORES

Ratings reflect what our editors felt about a particular wine. Beyond the rating, we encourage you to read the accompanying tasting note to learn about a wine's special characteristics.

<b>Classic 98-100:</b>	The pinnacle of quality.
<b>Superb 94-97:</b>	A great achievement.
<b>Excellent 90-93:</b>	Highly recommended.
<b>Very Good 87-89:</b>	Often good value; well recommended.
<b>Good 83-86:</b>	Suitable for everyday consumption; often good value.
<b>Acceptable 80-82:</b>	Can be employed in casual, less-critical circumstances.

Wines receiving a rating below 80 are not reviewed.

### SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

**Editors' Choice** wines are those that offer excellent quality at a price above our Best Buy range, or a wine at any price with unique qualities that merit special attention.

**Cellar Selections** are wines deemed highly collectible and/or requiring time in a temperature-controlled wine cellar to reach their maximum potential. A Cellar Selection designation does not mean that a wine must be stored to be enjoyed, but that cellaring will probably result in a more enjoyable bottle. In general, an optimum time for cellaring will be indicated.

**Best Buys** are wines that offer a high level of quality in relation to price. There are no specific guidelines or formulae for determining Best Buys, but they are generally priced at \$15 or less.

### SUBMITTING WINES FOR REVIEW

Wines should be submitted to the appropriate reviewing location as detailed in our FAQ, available online via [winemag.com/contact](http://winemag.com/contact). Inquiries should be addressed to Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo at 914.345.8463 or email [tastings@wineenthusiast.net](mailto:tastings@wineenthusiast.net). **There is no charge for submitting wines.** We make every effort to taste all wines submitted for review, but there is no guarantee that all wines submitted will be tasted, or that reviews will appear in the magazine. All wines must be accompanied by a submission form, which may be downloaded from our Web site.

### LABELS

Labels are paid promotions. Wineries and winery representatives are given the opportunity to submit labels, which are reproduced and printed along with tasting notes and scores. For information on label purchases, contact Denise Valenza at 813.571.1122; fax 866.896.8786; or email [dvalenza@wineenthusiast.net](mailto:dvalenza@wineenthusiast.net).

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obvious now, and will take a few years of cellaring. —S.H.

**88 Dashe Cellars 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$38.** Fruit and spice star in this bone-dry Cabernet. It's very forward in blackberries, cherries, currants and dark chocolate, while the spice shows in the form of pepper, clove and star anise. The tannins are quite strong and rasping, and may never fully resolve. Give it 3–5 years in the cellar. —S.H.

**88 Inspiri 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$49.** Shows the tobaccoey herbaceousness and soft tannins of Alexander Valley, with polished cherry and red currant fruit brushed with smoky oak. This lovely, easy-drinking but complex wine should develop in the bottle over the next six years. —S.H.

**88 Rocca 2006 Collinetta Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$85.** A bit leaner and more herbal than many of its Napa cousins, the '06 Rocca nonetheless is an elegantly constructed wine, reminiscent of a good, minor Bordeaux. The blackberry fruit combines with oak to provide richness and texture. —S.H.

**88 William Hill Estate 2006 Bench Blend Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$40.** Quite a nice Cabernet Sauvignon from this veteran producer, but be warned. It's very tannic. There's a hard astringency that locks it down, but underneath that is beautifully ripened blackberry and cherry fruit. Will it age? Probably not for more than 4–6 years, when the tannins will still be there. —S.H.

**87 Alexander Valley Vineyards 2006 Alexander School Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$40.** A good, ripey extracted Cabernet, and while it's a little one-dimensional, it has enough heft to accompany a good steak. Shows tannic flavors of blackberries, black currants and dark chocolate. Drink now. —S.H.

**87 Crane Brothers 2006 Crane Ranch Vineyard Hillside Block Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$44.** A little sharp and green in tannins, but otherwise a very nice wine. It's dry and rich in blackberries and black currants, with a fine coating of smoky oak. Give it

a good decant and drink now and through 2012. —S.H.

**87 Happy Canyon Vineyard 2007 Picocho (Santa Ynez Valley); \$30.** Made from the Happy Canyon area, this Cabernet Sauvignon-based Bordeaux blend has good blackberry, cherry, currant, cocoa and cedar flavors, and is dry and richly tannic. The main drawback is sharp acidity that would be considered a flaw in most Napa Valley Cabs. Ready now. —S.H.

**87 Happy Canyon Vineyard 2006 Barrack Brand (Santa Ynez Valley); \$40.** Approaches a fine North Coast Bordeaux bottling in the complex blackberry and currant flavors and dryness, but there are problems. Acidity is high and fairly intrusive, and the oak tannins seem to dominate. Work needs to be done, but this Merlot-based blend gets an A for effort. —S.H.

**87 Herzog 2007 Special Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$38.** Rich, ripe and fruity, a good Cabernet to drink now for its intricate cherry, raspberry, milk chocolate, anise, spice and oak flavors. Feels soft and immediately accessible. —S.H.

**87 Hidden Ridge 2006 55% Slope Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County); \$40.** A very good, richly tannic wine that flatters with strong flavors of blackberries, cherries and oak. It may be a little too ripe for its own good, though, as it's pretty jammy. For some reason, the winery lowered the price considerably from the 2005, which was a much better wine. —S.H.

**87 Lava Cap 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (El Dorado); \$20.** Quite a nice Cabernet. The grapes got ripe under the mountain sun, contributing blackberry and cherry flavors, while a touch of oak adds caramelized toast. There's a bit too much acidity, which makes the wine sharp. But it's a pretty good job. —S.H.

**87 Maroon 2007 Maroon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$60.** Marked by strong, ripe fruit, this Cab is a bit one-dimensional. It offers waves of blackberries, cherries, raspberries and chocolate, with a rich coating of sweet, smoky oak, and has a soft, melted mouthfeel. Seems at its best now. —S.H.

**87 William Hill Estate 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$30.** Hard and tough in tannins now, with a dry astringency. It's a good, balanced Cabernet, with very rich blackberry, currant and chocolate flavors, but those gritty tannins are difficult. Give it a few years in the cellar. —S.H.

**86 Goldschmidt 2007 Crazy Creek Estate Fidelity (Alexander Valley); \$15.** From Cabernet maestro Nick Goldschmidt, this Merlot-Cabernet Franc blend is eminently drinkable now. It's soft and dry, with gentle tannins framing jammy raspberry and cherry flavors. —S.H.

**86 Janzen 2007 Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$150.** Too ripe and too oaky, and both attributes reinforce each other. The blackberry and currant fruit approaches Port in raisiny ripeness, while the oak accentuates the tannic sweetness. Clumsy now, but sometimes these wines improve in the long run. Try holding until after 2013. —S.H.

**86 Notre Vin 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); \$150.** At the age of nearly five years, this Cab still is curiously tough in tannins, even for Howell Mountain. That interferes with the enjoyment. Shows a good heart of blackberries, but it's a gamble whether the fierceness ever will age out. —S.H.

**86 Sodaro 2006 Felicity Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$40.** Blended from all five Bordeaux varieties, this wine has fine, strong flavors of blackberries, black currants and oak, and is dry. The texture, though, is a bit edgy, with jagged tannins and bitter hints of raisins and mint. Drink now. —S.H.

**86 Valley of the Moon 2007 Cuveé de la Luna (Sonoma County); \$30.** Mostly Cabernet Sauvignon, this Bordeaux blend is a nice wine for drinking now. It's very forward in blackberry, cherry and oak flavors, and finishes a little sweet. —S.H.

**86 Wofford Acres 2007 Estate Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (El Dorado); \$40.** Good flavors of blackberries, currants and cedar in this wine, with a rich, chocolatey edge. There are problems with the structure, though, that lead to a sharp, prickly mouthfeel. Drink now. —S.H.



**85 B Side 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$23.** A good and flavorful Cab, with intricate layers of blackberries, currants, anise and cedar, and entirely dry. The drawback is sharpness in the form of green, acidic tannins. Won't age, so drink up. —S.H.

**85 Girard 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa County); \$28.** A good Cabernet, although it's a bit tough in the mouth, with chewy tannins and a rusticity that comes from unevenly ripened fruit. Still, it's dry and clean, with enough blackberry and oak flavors to satisfy. —S.H.

**85 Notre Vin 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain); \$150.** Although this Cab is nearly seven years old, it's still hard and tough in tannins, and the tart acidity suggests it will remain unbalanced for the rest of its life. If you can get past the sharpness, it has dry flavors of blackberries, cherries and currants. —S.H.

## CALIFORNIA WHITE WINES

### CHARDONNAY

**95 Au Bon Climat 2007 Santa Barbara Historic Vineyards Collection Bien Nacido Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$30.** Amazingly rich and ripe, defining the Bien Nacido cool-climate style. The grapes hung for a long time in this excellent vintage, getting ripe and balanced, and the wine offers dazzling opulence, while preserving vital acidity. Showcases dessert pastry flavors of pineapples, mangoes, buttered toast, buttercream, meringue and honeysuckle, accented with dusty spices. Simply beautiful from first sniff to the last swallow. —S.H.

**95 Au Bon Climat 2007 Santa Barbara Historic Vineyards Collection Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Ynez Valley); \$30.** About as rich and flamboyant as California Chardonnay gets, a wine that blows you away with sheer pyrotechnic wizardry. Massive in grilled pineapples, mangoes, Key lime pie, vanilla honey, crème caramel and dusty spices, accented with perfect acidity. —S.H.

**95 Testarossa 2008 Diana's Chardonnay (Central Coast); \$55.** A best-of-barrels selection from the winery's various vineyards, this is a lush, intricate Chardonnay made in the modern style. It's fantastically rich in pineapple tart flavors, with the sweet, smoky crust, and more acidic citrus notes of Meyer lemons and limes. Oak aging and lees add fortunate layers of buttered toast and cream. Very intricate, with Chablisian dryness and minerality. Now–2014. —S.H.

**94 Hunnicutt 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$35.** A beautiful Chardonnay for drinking now. It's dry and crisp, with pineapple, peach and pear flavors accented with vanilla oak and creaminess from lees aging. Despite the richness, there's a firm minerality, a tang of steel that makes the wine bracing. The grapes are from a vineyard in the southerly, cool Coombsville area, an area that needs its own appellation. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**94 Lost Canyon 2008 Ruxtan Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River**



## THE LAND OF A THOUSAND WINES

Of all the world's great wine regions, Rioja is the most varied in terroir offering an extraordinary range of wines. From the awe-inspiring Sierra Cantabria mountains to the fertile Ebro River valley, to the harsh terrain of the Calahorra region, you'll find luscious reds, fruity young wines, refreshing rosés and crisp whites. The wines of the Alta, Alavesa and Baja regions match every style, taste and pricepoint and are considered the greatest of food wines. Rioja is the land of a thousand wines. Visit [vibrantrioja.com](http://vibrantrioja.com) and learn why Rioja is pure genius.

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**Valley); \$30.** Shows all the richness you could want in a Chardonnay, with smoky, buttery flavors of pineapples, lemons and pears, wrapped into a smooth, creamy mouthfeel. A scour of minerals gives the wine a steely grounding, while brilliant acidity makes the finish ultraclean. Really beautiful, a top Russian River Chardonnay at a fair price for the quality. The vineyard is in the cool Green Valley. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

**93 Au Bon Climat 2006 Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$35.** Extremely rich and ripe, with tremendous pineapple, pear, mango and white flower flavors that have been liberally oaked. Shows a touch of bitterness in the finish, which is probably the result of its age. Still, it's a flamboyant, impressive Chardonnay, like a magnificent old tapestry that's fraying a bit around the edges. —S.H.

**93 Au Bon Climat 2007 Santa Barbara Historic Vineyards Collection Sierra Madre Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$30.** Very ripe, rich and new-oaky, with dazzling flavors of ripe pineapples, pears, limes, caramel and buttered toast, drizzled with vanilla honey. A crowd-pleasing Chardonnay of enormous power and concentration. Could use a touch more nuance and complexity, but a tremendous wine at a good price for the quality. —S.H.

**93 Matanzas Creek 2007 Journey Chardonnay (Sonoma County); \$75.** A very rich Chardonnay, notable for its complex flavors of pineapples, sweet Meyer lemons, Key lime pie, buttered toast and smoky caramelized oak. Acidity is quite high, and plays a role in the way it tingles and cleanses the mouth. There's a fresh, jammy quality that makes the wine taste younger than its almost three years. Should develop in the bottle through 2013. —S.H.

**93 Pfendler 2008 Estate Grown Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$38.** Not for fans of rich Chardonnays, this is a very dry, acidic bottling. It's more about clean mouthfeel and scour than hedonism. What fruit there is suggests limes, pears and brisk minerals, while smoky oak and lees contribute toasty, buttery, creamy notes. A distinguished and elegant wine that defines cool-climate coastal conditions. Grows more complex and interesting as it warms in the glass. —S.H.

**92 Au Bon Climat 2008 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$20.** Opulent and captivating, this Chard captures the rich, bells and whistles style of California, while maintaining a sense of style and elegance. Coastal acidity provides a bracing structure for the ripe pineapple, lime, pear, white flower and mineral flavors. —S.H.

**92 Fritz 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$25.** Really delicious, a rich, opulent wine that beguiles from first sip to last. It's sweetly caramelized and vanilla-oaky, with crisp acidity brightening ultraripe flavors of pineapples, golden mangoes and buttered toast. —S.H.

**92 Iron Horse 2008 Native Yeast Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$46.** This is a very rich Chardonnay. It has complex, lush flavors of pineapples, lemons, limes, oranges and the smoky vanilla notes from 100% new oak. High acidity fortunately provides crisp balance. Almost too much of a good thing, it calls for equally rich fare, such as lobster or Ahi tuna tartare. —S.H.

**92 Patz & Hall 2008 Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast); \$35.** This is an austere Chardonnay whose minerality and acidity star. That's not to say it's not fruity. It has pineapple and green apple flavors, with oak and lees adding richer complexities. Still, it's a firm, Chablis-style wine, and a very good one that defines the elegant sleekness of the Sonoma Coast. —S.H.

**92 Testarossa 2008 Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Chardonnay (Sta. Rita Hills); \$39.** Made in a leaner, acidic, minerally style, this bone-dry wine feels ultra-clean and distinguished in the mouth. It's austere, but you'll find a core of pineapples, apples and limes. Great with a shellfish-inspired risotto. Elegant and food-friendly, it should develop over the next 4–5 years. —S.H.

**92 Testarossa 2008 Rosella's Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$44.** Made of equal parts ultraripe pineapple and exotic lime fruit, coupled with sweet, smoky crème brûlée and buttered toast from oak and lees stirring, this is a super-rich Chardonnay. Don't drink it too cold; it matures and knits together as it breathes in the glass. —S.H.

**91 Iron Horse 2008 Rued Clone Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$46.** Lots of crisp, citrusy acidity in this wine, which brightens the pineapple, orange, lemon and lime flavors. Meanwhile, 100% new oak adds a rich coating of smoky, buttered toast. The wine is dramatic, rather than subtle, and is at its best now. —S.H.

**91 Roessler 2008 Big Bend Estate Chardonnay (Carneros); \$32.** Very dry, crisp and minerally, with subtle citrus fruit and floral flavors, this Chardonnay suggests Chablis as its model. The elegant structure is likeable. If you're a fan of big fruit, it's not for you, but it's quite a classy Chardonnay. Good with cracked crab with drawn butter and buttered sourdough bread. —S.H.

**90 D.R. Stephens 2008 Estate Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$50.** A big improvement over the 2007, Stephens' '08 is rich and ripe. It brims with pineapple, buttered toast, vanilla and cinnamon flavors, brightened with crisp acidity. Easy to drink, and delicious through the finish. —S.H.

**90 Iron Horse 2008 Unoaked Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$26.** There's no oak on this Chardonnay, but it's so rich, you don't even notice. It's all pure, ripe pineapple, orange and lime fruit, accompanied by tart, clean Green Valley acidity. Tremendously versatile with food. —S.H.

**90 Iron Horse 2008 Estate Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$27.** Very forward in fruit, offering a powerful wave of pineapples, oranges, lemons, limes and peaches. Fortunately, all this richness is dry, and brightened with crisp, tart acidity. Suggests a rich lobster or shrimp risotto. —S.H.

**90 Iron Horse 2008 Corral Vineyard Chardonnay (Green Valley); \$46.** A very good Chardonnay, fancy and elegant, although it's a little sharp in the mouth, and lacks a certain hedonistic appeal, especially at this price. Shows dry, oak-inspired flavors of pineapples, green apples and pears, with a firm minerality. —S.H.

**90 Paul Dolan 2008 Chardonnay (Mendocino County); \$18.** A beautiful Chardonnay notable for its food-friendliness. Strikes a firm path toward dryness and minerality,



with suggestions of citrus, peach and vanilla. The racy acidity is wonderful. Defines elegance in Chardonnay, at a good price. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**90 Rancho Sisquoc 2008 Flood Family Vineyards Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County); \$20.** A beautiful Chardonnay at a great price compared to what's out there. Shows brilliantly ripe pineapple, pear and guava flavors, with crisp Central Coast acidity and a bracing minerality. Nice to drink by itself, with shellfish or even with a citrus fruit pastry for dessert. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**88 Rodney Strong 2008 Estate Vineyards Chardonnay (Chalk Hill); \$22.** Classy Chardonnay. Shows ripe, savory pineapple, Meyer lemon, lime and mineral flavors, brightened with crisp acidity and enriched with a touch of sweet oak. As rich as it is, it feels elegant and refined in the mouth. —S.H.

**88 William Hill Estate 2007 Bench Blend Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$35.** Made in the popular style of ripe fruit and plenty of oak, this Chard is rich in pineapple, pear, buttered toast and vanilla flavors. It's fortunately balanced with crisp acidity and a touch of minerals. Drink with rich fare, like lobster salad. —S.H.

**88 Wrath 2009 Ex Anima Chardonnay (Monterey); \$29.** Crisp, vital acidity marks this ultrarich wine with a mouth-watering bite of tartness. The flavors are enormous, suggesting long hang time fruit that ripened to pineapple, lime and mango perfection. Not particularly subtle, but flamboyant in the California style. —S.H.

**87 Baron Herzog 2008 Chardonnay (Central Coast); \$13.** Made in a food-friendly fashion, this Chard is dry, acidic and mineral. It was obviously picked at lower ripeness, but still shows a warm core of pineapples and green apples. Quite a nice wine for Chardonnay

fans to drink with roasted chicken, fleshy fish, or even a white meat such as pork. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**87 Chatom 2008 Chardonnay (Calaveras County); \$18.** A nicely drinkable Chardonnay marked by vigorous acidity and creamy-smooth flavors of pineapple tart, Key lime pie and lemongrass. Good as an inexpensive alternative to coastal bottlings that cost far more. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**87 Ghostwriter 2008 Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$28.** Very tightly wound in high acidity and even some tannins, with austere, aloof citrus flavors. There's not a lot of appeal to this wine now, except a certain dry, yeasty elegance. It's like a sparkling blanc de blancs without the bubbles. —S.H.

**87 Kenwood 2009 Chardonnay (Sonoma County); \$15.** Rich in oaky, fruity flavor, this wine satisfies with pineapples and other citrus fruits, buttered cinnamon toast



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\*Big Red Wine Book 2010/11, Campbell Mattinson and Gary Walsh, Hardie Grant Australia.



and vanilla. It's pretty direct, but the price is right for a clean, crisp Chard made in the popular style. —S.H.

**87 Martin Ray 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$20.** A big, bold, bright and spicy Chardonnay. You'll hardly miss the presence of oak, it's so rich in fruit. Floods the mouth with oranges, pineapples, lemons, limes and minerals, with crisp acidity. —S.H.

**87 Pennywise 2008 Chardonnay (California); \$12.** Great price for a big production (5,000 cases) Chardonnay of this quality. It's dry and crisp and elegantly structured, with savory citrus fruit, peach, mineral and vanilla flavors. Easily as good as many Chards far more costly. From Don Sebastiani & Sons. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

**86 Angeline 2008 Reserve Chardonnay (Sonoma County-Santa Barbara County); \$14.** A brisk, likeable Chardonnay. It shows ripe flavors of pineapples, peaches, lemons and sweet limes, accented with crisp coastal acidity. A hint of oak adds pleasant notes of buttered toast and vanilla. —S.H.

**86 Clos du Val 2008 Chardonnay (Carneros); \$24.** Bone dry and hard in acidity, this is an austere Chardonnay that lacks richness, and hopes to trade on elegance. It has modest pineapple flavors, touched with smoky oak and lees. Defines a low-alcohol, minerally approach. Drink now. —S.H.

**86 Fair Hare NV Chardonnay (North Coast); \$13.** A good, rich Chardonnay that satisfies fans of oaky, ripe bottlings. Brims with pineapple, peach, buttered toast and cinnamon spice flavors, brightened with crisp acidity. —S.H.

**85 Eberle 2009 Estate Bottled Chardonnay (Paso Robles); \$19.** Buttered toast and caramel corn dominate this Chardonnay, which also features ripe pineapple and golden mango flavors. It's made in the popular style of ripe, oaky fruitiness. —S.H.

**85 Justin 2009 Chardonnay (Paso Robles); \$21.** Dry, acidic and earthy, lacking the richness you want in a fine Chardonnay. Could almost be a Pinot Grigio, with its crisp citrus and mineral flavors. —S.H.

**85 Of The Place 2008 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$25.** This is a good, dry and racy Chardonnay. It's not rich or particularly fruity, but it is elegant, with mineral-infused suggestions of citrus fruits brightened with a bite of acidity. —S.H.

**85 Stephen Vincent 2008 Chardonnay (California); \$11.** Lots of rich pineapple, buttered toast, vanilla and cinnamon spice flavors in this Chard. It's made in an uncomplicated style to appeal to consumers who have made this kind of Chardonnay the most popular wine in America. —S.H.

## SAUVIGNON BLANC

**95 Chalk Hill 2008 Musque Sauvignon Blanc (Chalk Hill); \$40.** Expensive, but brilliant. At the forefront of California Sauvignon Blanc. Shows bright and clean acidity framing intense tangerine, lime and honey flavors, as well as complications from oak. Yet it finishes bone dry and elegant. Delicious and compelling, this wine lifts Sauvignon Blanc into entirely new territory. —S.H.

**95 Robert Mondavi 2006 To Kalon Vineyard I Block Fumé Blanc (Oakville); \$75.** Made from 100% Sauvignon Blanc, with a great many vines more than 50 years old, this is an enormously complex wine. Fruit doesn't dominate. Flowers and minerals do, with flavors of stones, herbs and earth. What fruit there is brings to mind tart limes and lemons, perhaps white apricots and peaches, with peppery Asian spice accents. Has the weight of a great red wine, and is bone dry. Don't drink it too cold. Will age for a long time, perhaps a decade, in a cool cellar. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**94 Chalk Hill 2008 Sauvignon Gris (Chalk Hill); \$40.** A gorgeous wine, dry and complex, whose natural fruit richness and acidity have been accented by full-bore Burgundian treatment of sur lies and oak barrel aging. It's basically a Sauvignon Blanc, with citrus flavors and a mouthwatering green fruit taste that suggests limes and kiwis. Combines a bracing quality with richness, and the result is compelling. —S.H.

**93 Conspire 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Rutherford); \$28.** A beautiful, fancy Sauvignon Blanc, crisp and dry and complex. If

you're looking for a California white to drink with a perfect roast chicken, it's a fine choice. Shows ripe, lush citrus, tropical fruit, peach, mineral and white flower flavors, finished with dusty cinnamon spices. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**93 Joseph Jewell 2008 Redwood Ranch Sauvignon Blanc (Alexander Valley); \$24.** Jewell threads the needle where so many others fail with this dry, elegant Sauvignon Blanc. Does exactly what it should, providing a mouthwateringly crisp white wine that scours and cleanses the palate. The flavors are of limes, lemons, grapefruits, wildflowers and stony, tangy minerals. Really a brilliant wine, among the best of its class. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**92 Brander 2009 Cuvée Nicholas Sauvignon Blanc (Santa Ynez Valley); \$25.** A blend of Sauvignon Blanc, with one-quarter Sémillon, this white blend was aged on the lees in oak barrels. It shows the balanced elegance this bottling by Brander usually displays. Entirely dry, with a crisp burst of acidity, its flavors are of citrus fruits, white flowers, vanilla, minerals and a touch of tart, New Zealand-style gooseberry. Great with roast pork or, if you can get it, wild boar. —S.H.

**92 Chalk Hill 2008 Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Chalk Hill); \$33.** A bright, beautifully brisk Sauvignon Blanc, marked with crisp acidity and racy flavors of citrus fruits and gooseberries, accented with sweet oak. It's a creamy, deliciously complex wine, and although it's fully dry, it finishes with a honeyed richness. —S.H.

**92 Foursight 2008 Charles Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Anderson Valley); \$20.** Shows great acidity that really gets the tastebuds whistling, and also deep, complex varietal flavors of Meyer lemons, limes and sweet vanilla, with a green grass component in the background. Very fine and dry, an elegant, sophisticated Sauvignon Blanc of great integrity. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**92 Robert Mondavi 2008 Reserve Fumé Blanc (Oakville); \$40.** The grapes from this wine come mainly from older blocks in the To Kalon Vineyard, adjoining the winery. It contains 5% Sémillon. The wine is graceful and elegant in the mouth, with bracing acidity and a minerality that reminds you of cold, wet stones. Yet there are flavors of citrus fruits



and white flowers. Dense and complex, this full-bodied wine is best enjoyed not too cold. —S.H.

**91 Long Meadow Ranch 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Rutherford); \$18.** A beautiful and compelling Sauvignon Blanc that gives the acidity and citrusy brightness you want in the variety, but contains extra layers of complexity. Offers waves of fresh green grass, Meyer lemon, sweet lime and mineral flavors that don't appear to have any oak. Brilliant with crab cakes, toasted sourdough bread with goat cheese, or on its own as a cocktail sipper. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**89 Groth 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$19.** Pretty good price for a bone-dry, crisply elegant Sauvignon Blanc with such good flavor. It's citrusy in limes and grapefruits, with richer notes of figs and melons, and finishes with a scour of spice. —S.H.

**88 Angeline 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley); \$14.** If there's any oak on this wine, it doesn't show. What does show up is crisply clean acidity and brilliantly ripe pineapple, lime and honeysuckle flavors, brightened with crisp acidity. It's a lovely cocktail sipper, and nice with bruschetta and olive or mushroom tapenade. **Editors' Choice.** —S.H.

**87 Fritz 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley); \$18.** A very good Sauvignon Blanc, crisp in cool-climate acidity and clean in the mouth, with a scour of minerals. It's also very fruity, showing flashy flavors of tangerines, pineapples and peaches. Delicious as a cocktail sipper. —S.H.

**87 Maddalena 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Paso Robles); \$14.** A lovely, everyday drinking Sauvignon Blanc. It's zesty in acidity, with mouth-cleansing flavors of lemons, limes and oranges. Finishes a little sweet, but not too much. A delight for late afternoon cocktails with little munchies, like puff pastry mushrooms. —S.H.

**87 Martin Ranch 2009 J.D. Hurley Sauvignon Blanc (Arroyo Seco); \$20.** Here's a bone-dry, crisply acidic and ultra-clean Sauvignon Blanc. Its lemongrass, lime and grapefruit flavors are savory and bright, and accented with a cold streak of stony minerals. —S.H.

**87 Matanzas Creek 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County); \$19.** Quite

a nice Sauvignon Blanc, although it could be a tad drier on the finish, as there's a jammy, fruit tart quality. Shows crisp acidity framing ripe lemon, lime, green apple, melon and spice flavors. —S.H.

**87 Rochioli 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley); \$35.** From one of the Russian River's premier Sauvignon Blanc producers, although recent vintages have slipped in quality. The '09 is a good wine, dry and crisp, with citrus, gooseberry and spice flavors. But it's missing the richness of earlier vintages. —S.H.

**87 Twomey 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$25.** Could be drier and more mineral, because the lemongrass, gooseberry and wildflower flavors finish jammy-sweet. But ultracrisp acidity helps to balance, and the ultimate impact of this wine is mouth-cleansing and steely. —S.H.

**87 Woodbridge by Robert Mondavi 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$8.** Likeable for its extreme dryness and crisp acidity, and the way the citrus fruits and minerals tickle the palate and prepare it for food. It's a great cocktail wine, with lime, Meyer lemon, white peach and floral flavors. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

**86 Barefoot NV Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$7.** A terrific buy if you're looking for a bone-dry, crisply acidic and mineral Sauvignon Blanc. It shows rewarding flavors of lemons, limes, spices and vanilla. Very clean and nice, and easy to find, with 338,000 cases produced. **Best Buy.** —S.H.

**86 Picazo 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$35.** Bone dry, with crisp, mouth-cleansing acidity and flavors of citrus fruits, minerals and vanilla. There's a touch of gooseberry and muscat. Turns almost sour toward the finish, but it's zesty and alive. —S.H.

**86 Selene 2009 Hyde Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc (Carneros); \$27.** Dry, ripe and exotic. Made from the Musqué clone, it shows melon, lime, mineral and white pepper flavors, with a touch of New Zealand-style gooseberry, brightened with crisp acidity. There are some green, feline notes that will make the wine controversial. Tasted twice. —S.H.

**85 Field Stone 2009 Redwood Ranch Sauvignon Blanc (Alexander Val-**



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ley); \$20. A bit on the sugary sweet side, but otherwise this is a nice cocktail sipper. Shows good acidity coupled with pineapple, Meyer lemon, lime, green apple and spice flavors. Would score much higher if it were drier. —S.H.

## WASHINGTON

### CABERNET SAUVIGNON

**96 Quilceda Creek 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$125.** This feels slightly softer in the mouth than the massive 2006, but carries the density and gravitas that one associates with Quilceda Creek. Wonderful balance, with a deeply detailed set of flavors that gather strength as they move through the palate. Mixed berries, threaded with chocolate, lingering with black cherry, cassis, smoke, cedar, lead pencil and more. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

**94 J. Bookwalter 2007 Foreshadow Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$42.** This wine's dense complexity is immediately apparent in the nose; offering hints of Asian spice, cinnamon, cardamom, along with supple layers of purple and black fruits. The tannins are substantial and fine-grained, perfectly ripe, and the threads of black olive, smoke, tar and coffee weave seamlessly into the finish. There is a balance point here—it has not reached too far; it's just right. —P.G.

**93 Seven Hills 2007 Klipsun Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain); \$32.** This 100% Cabernet, from the iconic Klipsun vineyard, has been sourced from the original 1989 planting since the first crop, making Seven Hills Klipsun's longest standing customer. This offers deep cassis, mineral, and earth flavors, powerful and dense. The Seven Hills style, ordinarily restrained and elegant, suits this vineyard especially well, as it reins in the tendency of Klipsun fruit to go over the top, and become too tannic. This is muscular and deep, but proportionate and detailed. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**92 Arbor Crest 2007 Stillwater Creek Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$25.** A single vineyard, 100% varietal Cabernet Sauvignon, this is deep, dark, dense, chewy and tannic. Yet it still captures some delicate floral aromas as well as smoke and rock and black fruits. You go from flower to fruit to earth

and black olive in a rush of full-bodied flavor. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

**92 Gramercy Cellars 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$42.** Though mostly Cabernet from an excellent Horse Heaven Hills vineyard, this also includes 15% Merlot from Pepper Bridge. It coats the tongue with velvety softness and drying tannins. It suggests elegance and breed immediately, Cabernet's classic cassis married to herbal grace notes and a strong mineral streak. A lovely food wine. —P.G.

**91 Quilceda Creek 2007 Galitzine Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain); \$98.** This is a strikingly pure expression of single-vineyard, Red Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon. Focused and tight, it is extremely dense and textural, with a mix of cassis and coffee. Some of the minerality of the neighboring Ciel du Cheval vineyard is just beginning to show in the fruit from these young vines as well. —P.G.

**91 Seven Hills 2007 Seven Hills Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$32.** A seductive nose, densely loaded with black currants and smoke, leads into a textural, single-vineyard, 100% Cabernet with great varietal presence and definition. It needs to breathe open, which puts on more flesh, and starts to unpack the layers. Streaks of mineral, iron, graphite and more cassis roll into the finish. —P.G.

**91 Seven Hills 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$25.** Still young, steely and firm, but classy and deep. This has the best attributes of the '05 and '06 Columbia Valley Cabs from Seven Hills—ripe and polished black fruits, firm tannins, a supple finish with a veneer of smoke and licorice. In other words, this is a complete, complex and intriguing Bordeaux blend, with plenty of aging potential. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

**91 Tamarack Cellars 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$32.** Dark and smoky, earthy and compact, this textbook Cabernet Sauvignon shows muscle and steel at its core. Though tannic and still encased in a bit of a hard shell, it already displays beautifully defined varietal character, and it doesn't shy away from the herbal side of the grape. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

**91 Tempus Cellars 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$30.** The blend includes old vine (1972 planting) Cabernet from Sagemoor, along with some Klipsun fruit and Seven Hills Merlot. This shows solid winemaking, excellent varietal character, and the structure to age gracefully. The tight cassis fruit is delineated with details of tarragon, rosemary and thyme. —P.G.

**90 Arbor Crest 2007 Five Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$18.** Assertive, tannic, and earthy, this includes generous and pretty plum and black cherry fruit in the core. A nice mix of tart, ripe fruit with the interesting flavor components of leaf and herb, olive and licorice, that extend the finish and put a frame around the fruit. —P.G.

**90 Skylite Cellars 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$32.** A pure, varietal Cabernet Sauvignon, from a mix of Walla Walla vineyards. With a great Cabernet vintage, a new consulting winemaker (Robert Smasne) and excellent fruit sources, Skylite Cellars hits a real high note here. Lush black cherry fruit is framed in ripe, chewy tannins; the wine is dense and textural, with hints of herb and alcohol at a moderate 13.5%. —P.G.

**90 Waterbrook 2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$22.** A very fine effort, with classic cassis and black cherry in the fruit core, but also offering interesting details of bark, earth and herb. The wine lingers, perhaps due to excellent natural acidity, and without overpowering the palate it keeps tantalizing it with nuances of moist earth and wet rock. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**89 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$16.** This just sneaks in as varietal Cabernet Sauvignon; there is 15% Syrah, 6% Merlot, and 3% Malbec in the blend. 2007 is a fine vintage for Washington reds, and this pulls together black cherry and cassis, thick, ripe tannins, and a steely, iron ore streak that puts a spine down the middle. Good grip and concentration. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**89 Kontos Cellars 2007 Pepper Bridge Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$32.** This wine captures the flavor of the vineyard, one of Walla Walla's iconic sites. It's pure Cabernet, offering cherry and cas-



sis fruit annotated with dried herbs and black olive notes. Good density, and a smoky quality infuses the finish. —P.G.

**89 Mannina Cellars 2008 Birch Creek Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$30.** Right away this appealing wines bursts out with scents of chocolate and vanilla—the barrels used were Hungarian and American oak. The fruit is ripe with plum and cassis, the wine still tight and the tannins still chewy and hard. But the pleasing aromas promise a good life ahead. —P.G.

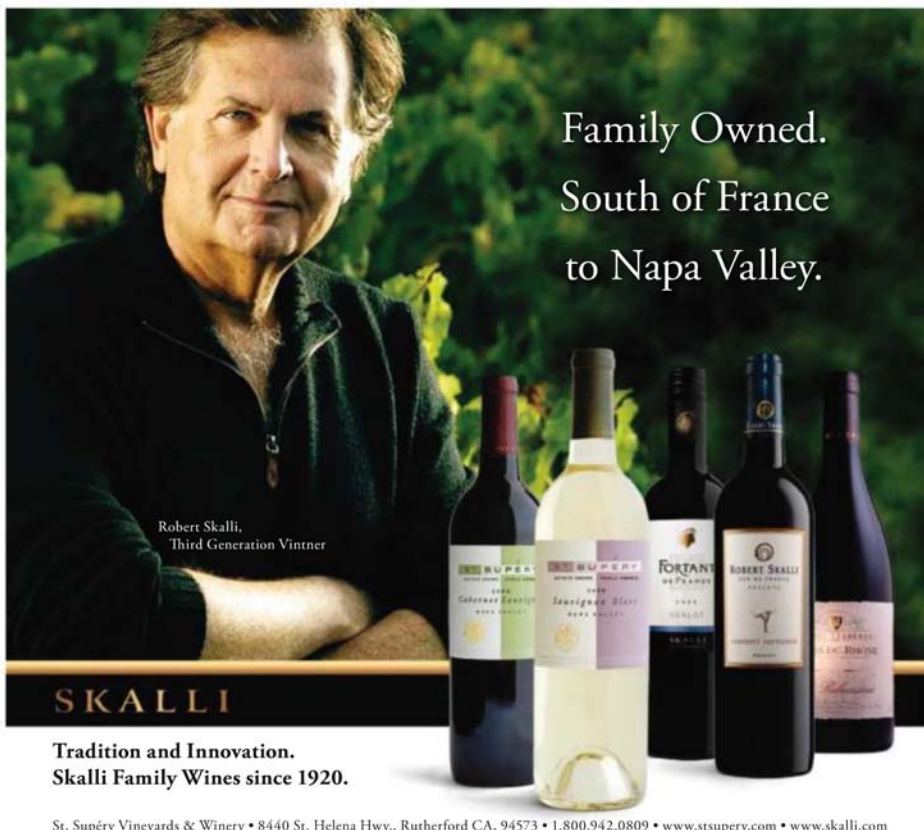
**88 Sapoli Cellars 2005 Pepper Bridge Vineyard Block 66 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$48.** Pure Cabernet Sauvignon from the Pepper Bridge vineyard; now with several extra years in bottle. It's drinking well at five years of age, with strawberry and cherry fruit, bracing acidity and chalky, highly astringent tannins. The finish brings in leaf, pepper and coffee grounds. —P.G.

**85 Pend d'Oreille 2006 Berghan Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Washington); \$28.** There's a whiff of volatile, hot fermentation aromas that overlie black cherry and smoky tar. In the mouth this is a chewy, earthy, smoky Cabernet, suitable for outdoor dining and grilled meats. The tannins are still showing a little green edge, but some extra breathing softens them up. —P.G.

## RED BLENDS

**95 J. Bookwalter 2007 Conner Lee Vineyard Conflict (Columbia Valley); \$50.** This is a revelation. The complex and site-specific aromas suggest wild herb, lavender, lemon verbena and black olive. The tannins are supple and ripe, with no green edge at all. The fruit combines mineral-soaked black cherry, sweet raspberry compote, and deep cassis. A marvelous wine, dense, detailed and seductive. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**94 àMaurice 2007 Red Blend (Columbia Valley); \$35.** This vintage has the Horiuchi artist label. Another glorious wine from the 2007 vintage, full and forward, packed with plum and purple fruits. Sweet tobacco and baking spices lead into a lush, fruit-loaded core, ripe with berries and plums. The finish—thick and



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textural and darkly chocolaty—wraps around polished, elegant tannins. —P.G.

**93 J. Bookwalter 2007 Chapter 3 (Columbia Valley); \$78.** This is only the third time the Chapter wine has been made since it debuted in 2002. It's a selection of the five or 10 best barrels—essentially the J. Bookwalter reserve. It is definitely the darkest and most muscular of the 2007's, and it builds upon thick tannins, liquorous oak and deep, rich, dark fruits. It's drinking well right now but should hold for up to a decade. —P.G.

**93 Quilceda Creek 2007 Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$35.** You have to love the '07 vintage. This is drinking beautifully right now, though official release (September) is still a ways off. Rich and delicious, full-bodied and aromatic, with exotic barrel scents and a lovely mélange of chocolate, mocha, caramel and spice. But the fruit is the main story, and it's full, ripe and substantial—cherry and cassis, licorice and just a hint of leaf. —P.G.

**93 Seven Hills 2006 Pentad Red Wine (Walla Walla); \$50.** Dark, bold, and full-bodied, this is the perfect embodiment of power and breed in a full-on (five grape) Bordeaux blend. Boysenberry, cassis, plenty of acidity—the nose promises a great deal, though it is reticent in the mouth, and fairly acidic. This is a wine to lay down and enjoy in a decade. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

**93 Tamarack Cellars 2007 DuBrul Vineyard Reserve (Rattlesnake Hills); \$45.** This single-vineyard blend's flavors run through all the berries right into dense cassis. It gathers more strength as it rolls through the midpalate, layering in earth and black cherries, with char and toast more noticeable than in the other Tamarack reds. *Cellar Selection.* —P.G.

**92 J. Bookwalter 2007 Protagonist (Red Mountain); \$50.** Lushly aromatic and toasty, the substantial oak flavors are set against deep, brambly berry and cassis fruits. There are subtle suggestions of mint and some alcoholic heat, and an interesting orange peel scent carries into the mouth. The tannins are big and ripe and not at all bitter or too heavy. —P.G.

**92 Quilceda Creek 2007 Palengat (Horse Heaven Hills); \$85.** Quilceda's Palengat is now a proprietary blend, not a

strict Cabernet as before. You can smell the violets amidst nicely layered aromatics, built upon layers of black fruits, cassis and dark, smoky elements. Smoke, earth, coffee, a hint of iron and rock continue into the midpalate, which loses a little density as it moves through the finish. That may be a reflection of the young-ish (7 to 10 year old) vines. —P.G.

**91 àMaurice 2006 Red Blend (Columbia Valley); \$35.** This vintage has the Tsutakawa artist label. Nicely crafted and in good proportion, it's a supple wine with plenty of powerful cassis fruit, backed with licorice. Compact and concentrated, with generous barrel toast, butterfat and smoke. —P.G.

**91 Lullaby 2007 Lalayee Red (Walla Walla); \$35.** Lalayee, says winemaker Virginie Bourgue, means lullaby in Persian. This 51/49 Cab/Merlot blend is textural and pretty, a palate-coating potpourri of cranberry, pomegranate, blue plum and cassis fruit. Bourgue has layered in new barrel nuances of coffee and caramel latté, with a whiff of smoke. —P.G.

**91 Sinclair Estate Vineyards 2007 Vixen Red (Columbia Valley); \$45.** This captivating wine treads the line between Rhône and Bordeaux. A splash of Cabernet, though just a fraction of the blend, stands out. The wine has depth and persistence, and the mix of grapes works well, showing brambly red fruits, like a Zin, spice and pepper, like Syrah, and some herbal and leafy tobacco in the finish. Complex, unique and quite appealing. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

**91 Tamarack Cellars 2007 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Reserve (Red Mountain); \$45.** A crisp mix of black cherry, iron filings, moist earth, and dry, dry tannins, it needs more time in bottle and cellar to flesh out. But all the right pieces are already in place. —P.G.

**90 Kana 2006 Scarlet Fire Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Reserve (Red Mountain); \$25.** A big (15.6% alcohol) and assertive Rhône blend. Red Mountain's iconic Ciel du Cheval vineyard is the source of the excellent fruit, which brings a mix of black pepper, wild ferns, herbs, tart raspberries and cold stone. Penetrating and compact. —P.G.

**90 Sinclair Estate Vineyards 2007 Pentatonic Red Wine (Columbia**

**Valley); \$55.** Pleasingly soft in the mouth, this blend of Cabernet, Merlot, Malbec and Syrah is supple with a mellow fruitiness. Cassis and cherries dominate the midpalate, with new oak barrels filling in the back with toast and butterscotch and vanilla. The alcohol is 14.4%—moderate by current standards—and there's a tickle of tobacco in the finish. This already drinks very well, and can also age over the medium term. —P.G.

**90 Tamarack Cellars 2006 Sagemoor Vineyard Reserve (Columbia Valley); \$50.** This half Cabernet, one quarter each Merlot and Cab Franc offers a lovely mix of herb and earth, moderate density, nicely spiced, with brambly red fruits. It shows delicate old vine character, making up with refined herbal flavors what it lacks in fruit sweetness. —P.G.

**89 Foundry Vineyards 2007 Fire Red Wine (Walla Walla); \$24.** The Fire Red is a four grape Bordeaux blend, with an interesting flavor mix that runs through red and black berries, cassis, cedar, smoke and dark chocolate. The 21 months in barrel (French and American) shows well, and the fruit and acids balance nicely against the roasty toasty espresso in the finish. Give it an hour or two to breathe and the midpalate fills in nicely. —P.G.

**89 Kana 2006 Old Vines (Yakima Valley); \$18.** Mostly Lemberger, from a 1979 planting, this is an explosion of sweet berry and milk chocolate—what's not to like? Luscious and full across the palate, it's a raspberry truffle in a bottle. Not sweet, so not for dessert, but in a way it is dessert all by itself. —P.G.

**88 Foundry Vineyards 2007 Artisan Blend Red (Walla Walla); \$36.** Still young and battened down, it brings in grapey red fruits, plenty of barrel toast and some astringent tannins. Aromatically it seems to promise more than it currently delivers in the mouth; perhaps it has simply entered a dumb phase. In any event, give this one a good decanting. —P.G.

**88 Mannina Cellars 2007 RoseAnne's Red (Walla Walla); \$20.** First release, mother's name, this Bordeaux blend is sharp and showing some volatility in the nose, but smooth and ripe, with raisins and prunes in the mouth. It's almost like an apéritif, with a mix of botanical flavors. Good density and balance. —P.G.



**88 Ott & Murphy 2007 L'Entente (Horse Heaven Hills); \$34.** A Rhône blend that's bright and fruity, with flavors of mixed berries and a streak of bark and pepper. Drinks young, suggesting that further bottle age or decanting is a good idea. —P.G.

**88 Ott & Murphy 2007 Mystique (Columbia Valley); \$27.** A five-grape Bordeaux blend, substantial and pretty. Sweet, slightly candied cherry and plum fruit opens the wine, which has some interesting layering, bringing in cassis, hints of herb and edgy tannins. —P.G.

**88 Tamarack Cellars 2008 Firehouse (Columbia Valley); \$18.** As always, this new vintage over-delivers, with deep color, plummy fruit flavor and substantial tannins. The wine coats the throat with rich and lightly chocolate tannins, textural and medium-grained. —P.G.

**88 Waterbrook 2006 Meritage (Columbia Valley); \$30.** Watermelon, blueberry and black cherry fruit come through in this Bordeaux blend, the flavors light and forward, with details of pencil shavings, red licorice and moist earth. It offers good complexity in a lighter style, with a suggestion of heat in the finish. —P.G.

**87 Foundry Vineyards 2006 FV Red Wine (Walla Walla); \$18.** A 50/50 blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, this brings sweet cherry flavors to the forefront, albeit with some noticeable volatility. You can taste it in the slightly vinegary finish; but that said, it's a perfectly pleasant wine with enough fruit to carry it for a couple more years. —P.G.

**87 Kana 2006 Dark Star (Columbia Valley); \$20.** This is almost entirely Syrah, done in a high-acid, citrusy style. Flavors are sharply etched and tight—pomegranate, raspberry, baking chocolate and espresso. Straightforward and well-balanced despite its 15% alcohol. —P.G.

**87 Mannina Cellars 2008 Cali Red (Walla Walla); \$17.** The winery's most popular wine, Cali is 49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 47% Merlot and 4% Sangiovese. Nice aromatics lead into a medium-bodied wine with bright spices, strawberry preserves, some sour plum, and defining acidity, with a lick of chocolate in the finish. —P.G.

**87 Three Rivers 2008 River's Red (Columbia Valley); \$15.** Eight vineyards and six grapes go into this table red; in some vintages this hits the mark, as it does here. It has just enough flesh to plump out the blackberry and black cherry fruit; and the tannins are polished, with hints of licorice and coffee. —P.G.

**87 Waterbrook 2007 Merlot-Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$13.** Nice mix of berry, chocolate and spicy herb flavors, with good persistence. The excellent fruit sources yield an easy-drinking red blend that stays light and fruity from midpalate on through. —P.G.

**86 Patit Creek Cellars 2007 Roux (Columbia Valley); \$28.** About half Cabernet, the rest a Bordeaux mix, this opens nicely with forward plum and cherry fruit. There are notes of savory herbs in the nose, but the wine turns astringent and the finish a little chalky and stemmy. —P.G.

**86 Stella Fino 2007 Rosso (Columbia Valley); SNA.** Included in the blend are both Barbera and Sangiovese, tasting like fruit from very young vines, with light and simple red fruit flavors, lots of acidity and a quick fade. —P.G.

## AUSTRALIA RED WINES

### CABERNETS & BLENDS

**92 Penley Estate 2006 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Coonawarra); \$50.** Penley's Reserve Cabernet sees 100% new French oak, but handles it well, blending coffee and brown sugar elements with fruitier notes of plum and a hint of mint. It's full-bodied and lushly textured, with smoky, cedary oak wrapped around a core of dark fruit. Drink now–2016. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**91 B3 2005 Cabernet Merlot (Barossa); \$27.** A blend of 51% Cabernet and 49% Merlot, this is fully mature and not likely to improve further, but it is a rich, succulent mouthful of red wine. Savory and sweet elements combine easily, mingling meat and umami notes with plummy fruit and cigarbox nuances. Imported by Beverage Traders, LLC. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**91 Jim Barry 2004 The Benbournie Cabernet Sauvignon (Clare Valley); \$100.** Jim Barry's luxury Cabernet is amazingly fresh and youthful even six years after the harvest, which bodes well for its longevity. Cassis fruit and barrel char pick up herbal, tobacco-like shadings on the palate, which is full bodied while at the same time showing Cabernet's characteristic restraint. Drink 2014–2025. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. *Cellar Selection.* —J.C.

**91 Penley Estate 2006 Chertsey (Coonawarra); \$50.** The 2006 Chertsey is a blend of 49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 47% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 100% French oak. The oak's vanilla and cedar notes provide a foundation for the wine's cassis and plum flavors, cossetting them in soft tannins. Drink now–2018. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**91 Peter Lehmann 2005 Mentor Cabernet Sauvignon (Barossa Valley); \$38.** The warmth of Barossa shows in this wine, but it remains exceptionally balanced, being ripe without being overly soft, and muscular without being overly firm or crisp. The cassis, mint and chocolate notes finish with a fine dusting of tannins. Drink now–2020. Imported by Hess Collection. —J.C.

**91 Yalumba 2006 Menzies The Cigar Cabernet Sauvignon (Coonawarra); \$25.** Slightly minty on the nose, balanced by bold cassis fruit, plenty of weight and rich tannins that give the wine an almost chewy texture. Long, firm and a touch warm on the finish; drink now–2020. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**90 Cullen 2006 Diana Madeline (Margaret River); \$75.** Cullen's Diana Madeline is amazingly consistent from year to year, and the 2006 continues that tradition. It's maybe a touch fuller-bodied and rounder than some years, but maintains a sense of restraint and a timeless blend of tobacco, cedar and cassis, finishing with a flourish of mint. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**90 Hazyblurb 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Kangaroo Island); \$29.** Hazyblurb's 2006 Cabernet offers textbook aromas of cedar and slightly herbal fruit, although the flavors lean toward red berries rather than dark cassis. This is a full-bodied, authoritatively flavored wine, with a rough and tumble mix of lumber and



fruit that requires a couple of more years to come together; try 2012–2020. Imported by Bluestone Wine Solutions. —J.C.

**90 Jim Barry 2008 The Cover Drive Cabernet Sauvignon (Coonawarra); \$18.** Representing a good value in top-flight Cabernet, Jim Barry's 2008 The Cover Drive (a cricketer term) features subtle hints of cinnamon, coffee and vanilla layered over blueberry and plum fruit. It's on the full-bodied side, with plush, velvety tannins balanced by crisp acids. Drink now–2018. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**90 Penfolds 2006 Bin 407 Cabernet Sauvignon (South Australia); \$32.** One suspects that the 2006 Bin 707 is a special wine, given how well the 407 has turned out. Cassis, mint and cedar are the driving forces, with chocolate and coffee chiming in on the finish. It's full bodied, finely textured and firm without being hard, ending on a softly dusty flourish of tannin. Drink now–2018. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas. —J.C.

**89 Giant Steps 2006 Harry's Monster (Yarra Valley); \$30.** You might not know it from this wine's rather austere exterior, but this is actually from a warm site within the cool Yarra Valley. It's a restrained, slightly herbal blend of 62% Cabernet, 27% Merlot and 11% Petit Verdot that finishes with a tough mouthful of tannin. Hold it for another 3–4 years and hope that the fruit holds up. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. **Cellar Selection.** —J.C.

**89 Larry Cherubino 2008 Ad Lib Mix Master Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Margaret River); \$17.** At 15% alcohol, it does show a trace of warmth on the finish, but this is a full-bodied, richly textured wine of great appeal. Cassis fruit dominates, with hints of cherry, camphor and asphalt adding nuance. Best from 2012–2018. Imported by Vintage New World. —J.C.

**89 Penfolds 2006 Bin 389 Cabernet Sauvignon-Shiraz (Barossa); \$37.** Perhaps this just needs some additional time for the Cabernet and Shiraz components to meld, because right now it comes across as slightly chunky and warm, with cassis and plum flavors verging on prune, yet nicely framed by vanilla and cedar. Try 2012–2020, although this wine has a track record that suggests longer aging isn't out of

the question. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas. —J.C.

**89 Penfolds 2007 Thomas Hyland Cabernet Sauvignon (South Australia); \$15.** Good luck finding a Cabernet for \$15 that offers as much as this one does. It's filled with plums and cassis, accented by vanilla, coffee and chocolate notes. Ample weight and density are balanced by supple tannins. Should be fairly long-lived for a wine at this price; drink now–2020. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**88 Koonowla 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Clare Valley); \$29.** Don't expect bold, in-your-face fruit; this is a more savory expression of Cabernet, with leather, meat and soy notes, hints of dried fruit and chocolate. It's still full bodied and round in the mouth, and the finish lingers elegantly, brushed with silky tannins. Drink now–2015. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —J.C.

**88 Wakefield Estate 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Clare Valley); \$17.** Surprisingly firm in structure for a wine in this price range, with crisp acids and fine-grained tannins framing flavors of red currants, cinnamon and vanilla. There's a bit of a eucalyptus note as well, which may inspire or turn off some tasters, depending on your tolerance for that quality. Drink now–2020. Imported by American Wine Distributors. —J.C.

**87 De Bortoli 2008 Deen De Bortoli Vat 9 Cabernet Sauvignon (Australia); \$13.** Despite the reasonable price tag, this is a very good bottle of Cabernet, the kind that should be poured by the glass at your local steakhouse. The mixed berry and cedar flavors are easy to like, and it has enough crisp acidity and silky tannin to stand up to rare beef without being overly heavy or rich. Imported by De Bortoli Wines USA Inc. —J.C.

**87 Pearson Vineyards 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Clare Valley); \$37.** Plummy and cedary upfront, this is a somewhat blocky, extracted Cabernet Sauvignon that currently doesn't show much subtlety or finesse. What it does have is bold cassis fruit, plenty of intensity and a sturdy character that would pair nicely with grilled steak. Imported by Click Wine Group. —J.C.

**85 Mount Mary 2006 Quintet (Yarra Valley); \$125.** Renowned for its restraint and fine-ness, Mount Mary is an icon of Australian wine, and one that seems to perplex many American critics, including this one. Medium-bodied cherry fruit is tinged with vanilla and herb in this offering, which comes across as rather straightforward. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**85 Nick Faldo 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Coonawarra); \$16.** Produced in association with Katnook Estate, this is an easy-drinking Cabernet with substantial oak influence. The cranberry and currant fruit is rather herbal and even peppery, but it's cushioned by cedar and vanilla, turning silky-textured on the finish. Imported by Freixenet USA. —J.C.

## SHIRAZ

**91 Wakefield Estate 2002 St. Andrews Shiraz (Clare Valley); \$60.** Fully mature, this mouthfilling, supple Shiraz shows off Clare's savory side, beginning with beefy notes of bouillon and soy, then adding leather coffee and black olive to the mix. The long finish gracefully blends sweet and savory, then adds a dusting of fine tannins to keep everything in place. Drink now–2015. Imported by American Wine Distributors. —J.C.

**90 Jip Jip Rocks 2008 Shiraz (Padthaway); \$19.** A top value, this full-bodied yet supple Shiraz packs in the flavor, starting with dark, brooding fruit on the nose, developing intensely flavored mixed berries on the palate and finishing warm and long. Drink now. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**89 Wakefield Estate 2007 Shiraz (Clare Valley); \$17.** There's a slightly charry, roasted or asphalt top note to this wine's aromas, but the wine's flavors are an intriguing mix of cola, rhubarb and red berries, ending with mouthwatering raspberries coming to the fore. It's a full-bodied, creamy-textured wine that should be enjoyed over the next few years. Imported by American Wine Distributors. —J.C.

**88 Morambo Creek 2007 Shiraz (Padthaway); \$27.** Sometimes the biggest, oakiest wine in a producer's range doesn't get the highest score. This is loaded up with oak nearly to the detriment of the fruit, with



vanilla and cedar being the dominant flavors, although there's just sufficient red berried fruit to support it. A steakhouse red, or one that can be sipped as a meal itself. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —J.C.

**88 Mt. Monster 2007 Shiraz (Limestone Coast); \$13.** A corpulent, satisfying red at a bargain price, Mt. Monster's 2007 Shiraz offers vanilla, mint and plum aromas, a supple, creamy mouthfeel and layers of dark, super-ripe fruit. Drink it over the next year or two. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

**88 Sidewood 2007 Shiraz (Adelaide Hills); \$18.** An easy-drinking Shiraz, Sidewood's 2007 features a creamy texture, hints of mint and vanilla and copious raspberry fruit. It's crisp on the finish to help balance the softness of the tannins. Drink now–2017. Imported by Uncorked Inc. —J.C.

**86 Château Tanunda 2007 Grand Barossa Shiraz (Barossa); \$19.** With this wine's lifted aromas and candied fruit, it's frankly a bit confectionary. Chocolate-covered cherries define the palate, while the tannins are creamy-soft and the finish slightly warming. All that said, it's cleanly made, and fits the bill as an easy-drinking cocktail red. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —J.C.

## OTHER RED WINES

**90 Pearson Vineyards 2007 Cabernet Franc (Clare Valley); \$32.** Varietally labeled Cabernet Franc is a rarity in Australia, but this is a fine example, boasting black cherry and cassis fruit with restrained herbal shadings. It's slightly austere and structured, a refreshing alternative among the Clare Valley firmament. Imported by Click Wine Group. —J.C.

**89 Bleasdale 2007 Second Innings Malbec (Langhorne Creek); \$16.** Bold and powerful, Bleasdale's Malbec stands up to some of the best Argentine and French examples of Malbec, delivering plum and cassis flavors tinged with mint and vanilla. It's not very elegant or long, but it packs in the flavor. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**89 Creed of Barossa 2006 The Marquis Merlot-Cabernet Franc (Barossa); \$40.** A uniquely Barossan expression

of these two grape varieties, with ample wood framing smoked meat, tobacco and prune notes. It's full-bodied and richly textured, with the oak seeming to stand apart from the body of the wine just a little bit. Drink now–2018. Imported by International Spirits & Wines, LLC. —J.C.

## AUSTRALIA WHITE WINES

### RIESLING

**91 Paulett's 2008 Polish Hill River Riesling (Clare Valley); \$26.** A rich, amply endowed Clare Riesling, with potent lime aromas accented by touches of petrol, plenty of flavor intensity and a long finish composed of citrus and spice. Hints of baked apple and petrol suggest it may not be the longest-lived Riesling, but it's delicious now and should be good for another five years or so. Imported by International Spirits & Wines, LLC. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**90 Grosset 2008 Springvale Riesling (Clare Valley); \$38.** Like some of the other 2008s, this wine seems to be evolving rapidly—a common enough occurrence in hot vintages. Apple and citrus flavors still dominate, but the wine is already showing hints of honey and toast. Drink it now and over the next 3–5 years. Imported by USA Wine West. —J.C.

**90 Reilly's 2007 Watervale Riesling (Clare Valley); \$17.** Showing hints of development in its petrol and baked apple aromas and flavors, this medium-bodied Riesling should probably be consumed over the next few years while it retains the fruit to anchor its mouthwatering finish. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**89 Kilikanoon 2008 Mort's Block Watervale Riesling (Clare Valley); \$20.** Bright and lively, with elements of struck flint and lime on the nose, followed by flavors of peach, apple and lime. This medium-bodied Riesling is already starting to soften on the finish, showing the effects of the warm year. Drink it over the next 3–4 years. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**87 Kilikanoon 2008 Mort's Reserve Watervale Riesling (Clare Valley);**

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**\$35.** Starts off tighter and less giving than the regular Mort's Block, only gradually displaying its greater potential longevity. Offers crushed stone and lime notes, medium body and a clean green apple and citrus finish right now, but expect it to develop petrol, honey and toast notes within the next several years; drink now–2017. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

**87 Koonowla 2009 Riesling (Clare Valley); \$20.** Bright, crisp and fresh, as a 2009 Clare Riesling should be, this is a pretty wine, blooming on the nose with floral notes, apples and citrus fruit. The lime and green apple flavors are zesty on the finish, but not that long or intense. Probably best from now–2014, but could develop interesting nuances beyond that. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —J.C.

**86 Fire Block 2008 Watervale Dry Riesling (Clare Valley); \$18.** Straightforward apple and lime aromatics bust from the glass alongside some slightly smoky, struck-flint notes, but this wine offers rather simple fruit flavors on the palate. It's medium bodied, with a hint of honey already creeping in on the finish, suggesting early consumption is warranted. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —J.C.

**86 Penfolds 2008 Thomas Hyland Riesling (Adelaide); \$14.** Slightly musky and briny on the nose, with a broad underlay of peach. This medium-bodied Riesling seems lightly honeyed and a little soft relative to its peer group. A user-friendly introduction to Australian Riesling that should be consumed over the next 6–9 months. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas. —J.C.

**86 Petaluma 2008 Hanlin Hill Riesling (Clare Valley); \$20.** Shows some rather riper-than-expected fruit flavors, hinting at peach or nectarine as well as the standard apple and lime. The result seems a touch off-dry, although the actual residual sugar is only 3.5 g/L. Despite being lightweight in the mouth, it turns a bit honeyed and weightier on the finish. Drink it over the next few years. Imported by Lion Nathan. —J.C.

**85 Wirra Wirra 2008 The Lost Watch Riesling (Adelaide); \$18.** Already developed, with hints of toast and marmalade on the nose and showing baked apple and citrus flavors on the palate. This plump, medium-bodied Riesling finishes with a touch of honeyed soft-

ness, suggesting it should be consumed over the next year. Imported by International Vines, Inc. —J.C.

## SAUVIGNON BLANC

**90 Sidewood 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Adelaide Hills); \$16.** Sidewood's consulting winemaker, Nathasha Mooney (who made the still-stunning 1998 E&E Black Pepper Shiraz while at Barossa Valley Estate), is putting together some excellent wines that also represent good value, including this grapefruit-scented Sauvignon Blanc. This medium-bodied offering is long and intense, blending citrus with minerally spice reminiscent of white pepper. Imported by Uncorqed Inc. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**89 Longview 2009 Whippet Sauvignon Blanc (Adelaide); \$21.** The Adelaide Hills are becoming known as a source of fine Sauvignon Blanc, and this bottling is a perennial favorite. Hints of sweat add spicy nuance to the pink grapefruit and pineapple fruit. This is lean but not mean, with the crispness cushioned by fruit. Drink now. Imported by The Country Vintner. —J.C.

**89 Robert Oatley 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Pemberton); \$16.** Oatley has sourced the fruit for this wine from way out in Western Australia thousands of miles from his home base, but the results show why it was worth it. The aromas and flavors seamlessly marry fig, melon and pink grapefruit notes, while the wine is mouthfilling and lush without being overweight. Drink it over the next 6–12 months. Imported by Wine Spoken Here. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**88 Hewitson 2009 Lu Lu Sauvignon Blanc (Adelaide); \$18.** Pretty straightforward and citrusy, but very nicely balanced, with pineapple flavors working in harmony with the wine's medium body and lack of overt grassy or herbal notes. Shows more lime and grapefruit on the finish. Drink now. Imported by USA Wine West. —J.C.

**85 Yalumba 2009 Y Series Sauvignon Blanc (South Australia); \$10.** Stridently herbal on the nose, with flavors that verge on vegetal, this is nonetheless cleanly made, with enough lemongrass and grapefruit aromas and flavors to merit recommendation. Drink it over

the next six months or so. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. *Best Buy.* —J.C.

## CHARDONNAY

**89 Sidewood 2009 Chardonnay (Adelaide Hills); \$16.** Sidewood's 2009 Chardonnay is a throwback to the sort of delicious, well-priced Chardonnays Australia used to be known for, but with a touch more class. It delivers a big blast of upfront melon and peach fruit nestled in toasted cashew-like oak, then finishes fresh and citrusy. Good value for drinking over the next 6–12 months. Imported by Uncorqed Inc. *Editors' Choice.* —J.C.

**87 Oxford Landing 2009 Chardonnay (South Australia); \$8.** Easy to drink yet a bit interesting as well, this is a top-notch Chardonnay bargain. Features hazelnut and melon on the nose, then adds pineapple and vanilla to the mix on the palate before ending with a hint of white pepper. Drink now. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. *Best Buy.* —J.C.

**87 Tapestry 2009 Home Vineyards Unoaked Chardonnay (McLaren Vale); \$15.** Apple, melon and citrus aromas lead the way, rounded out on the palate by some slightly custardy notes of lemon curd. Fresh and citrusy on the finish, and without any oak treatment, this should prove versatile at the table. Imported by Avanti Fine Wine Selections. —J.C.

**86 Mt. Monster 2008 Chardonnay (Limestone Coast); \$13.** Grilled pineapple and tropical fruits mingle easily in this uncomplicated but well made Chardonnay. It's medium-bodied, with enough weight to stand up to roast chicken breasts and the like. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —J.C.

**86 Nepenthe 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay (Adelaide); \$16.** A medium-bodied Chardonnay, Nepenthe's 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay shows the strengths and weaknesses of avoiding oak. Without any sweet caramel or vanilla flavors, it should work well with food. On the other hand, its apple and citrus flavors lack complexity and display a certain angularity on the palate. Drink now. Imported by Click Wine Group. —J.C.

**86 Rocland Estate 2009 Ass Kisser Chardonnay (South Australia);**



**\$10.** Possessing bold waves of pineapple fruit, this is an intensely flavored Chardonnay at a reasonable price. It's fruity and direct, with clean citrus featuring prominently from start to finish. Imported by Rocland Wine Imports. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

**85 Jip Jip Rocks 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay (Padthaway); \$19.** Somewhat thick and pulpy in texture, with chunky apple, peach and musk melon fruit forming a fruit-cocktail of a Chardonnay. Simple, fruity and clean, with a citrusy note on the finish. Drink now. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —J.C.

**85 Yalumba 2009 Y Series Unwooded Chardonnay (South Australia); \$10.** Looking for a medium-bodied Chardonnay with a citrusy edge? Look no further. Peach and lime scents ease into tropical fruit while retaining that zestiness on the finish. Drink now. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

## PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

**87 Sidewood 2009 Pinot Gris (Adelaide Hills); \$16.** Pinot Gris is trendy in Australia, which to date hasn't meant great things in terms of home-grown quality. This is a pretty good example, offering a broad, thick texture balanced on the finish by peppery spice, while melon and apricot flavors carry the mid-palate. Drink it over the next 6–9 months. Imported by Uncorked Inc. —J.C.

**86 Robert Oatley 2009 Pinot Grigio (South Australia); \$16.** Made with a bit of skin contact, this pale copper-hued wine boasts scents of dusty earth and cantaloupe. Melon and apple-skin flavors mingle easily on the palate, ending with some light tannins and mouthwatering acids. Drink now–2011. Imported by Wine Spoken Here. —J.C.

**85 Oxford Landing 2009 Pinot Grigio (South Eastern Australia); \$8.** Slightly chunky in texture, this value-priced Pinot Grigio offers up a mouthful of pulpy apple and pear fruit, but not a lot of nuance or sophistication. Fine as a weeknight apéritif or alongside grilled chicken. Imported by Negociants USA, Inc. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

## SWEET WINES

**94 D'Arenberg 2008 The Noble Winkled Riesling (McLaren Vale); \$19/375 ml.** Lovely dessert-style Riesling at an extremely attractive price. It yields dried apricot aromas, then turns to honeyed marmalade in the mouth, just loaded with orange-apricot preserves. It's weighty and viscous, with a long, sweet finish. Should last through at least 2016. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**92 D'Arenberg 2008 The Noble Mud Pie Viognier-Pinot Gris-Marsanne (Adelaide); \$19/375 ml.** d'Arenberg has a quartet of sweet wines from 2008, and this blend of Viognier, Pinot Gris and Marsanne represents a terrific value. It's syrupy sweet, redolent of honey-drizzled, spiced poached pears. To quibble, it could be a touch more complex and crisp, but it is still a succulent mouthful of dessert wine for drinking over the next few years. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

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**90 Yalumba 2008 Hand Picked Botrytis Viognier (Wrattonbully); \$19/375 ml.** Gold in color, with an ebullient nose of spiced melon and sweet flavors of candied pineapple tinged with white pepper and grapefruit. At 12.5% alcohol and 117 g/L residual sugar, it's rich and sweet without being over the top. Drink now. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

**89 D'Arenberg 2008 The Stump Jump Sticky Chardonnay (McLaren Vale-Adelaide Hills); \$11/375 ml.** With the number of really good dessert wines available for under \$12 per bottle severely limited, this is a refreshing ray of golden sweetness. Dried apricots add enough citrus pith to partially balance out the intensely sweet flavors. Drink in the lusciousness over the next couple of years. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

**82 D'Arenberg 2008 The Noble Prankster Chardonnay-Semillon (Adelaide Hills); \$19/375 ml.** The other four d'Arenberg stickies from 2008 are top-notch, so the winery can be forgiven this misstep. The dried apricots on the nose seem singed, while the flavors of burnt orange peel finish slightly bitter. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

## CHILE RED WINES

### CABERNETS & BLENDS

**91 Altaïr 2006 Altaïr (Cachapoal Valley); \$65.** Starts out foxy and mossy, with leather, char, earth and herbal notes. The palate is nothing if not saturated and big, and the flavors run toward baked, meaty black fruits. Quite roasted and rich, with toasty oak on the finish and darkness throughout. Not the best Altaïr but still a fine Chilean red blend. Imported by Bertin Henri Selections. —M.S.

**90 Altaïr 2006 Sideral (Rapel Valley); \$31.** Olive, herb and earth aromas vie with foresty fruit aromas, while the palate is rough and ready, with rugged tannins and full flavors of baked fruit, caramel, herbs and chocolate. A catchy blended wine with a sweet finish and tons of flavor. Cabernet is the main player here; drink now through 2012. Imported by Bertin Henri Selections. —M.S.

**89 Casa Lapostolle 2008 Cuvée Alexandre Apalta Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$24.** A lush, extracted Cab with lead pencil, wood shavings, burnt toast and thick black fruit aromas. There's no shortage of body and boldness, but it is kind of thick and soupy, and also fairly tannic. Flavors of roasted berries, rubber and fig paste are rich but somewhat short on complexity. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

**89 El Huique 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$13.** Herbal cherry and floral aromas provide a nice opening, and the palate is full and balanced, like a solid Colchagua Cab should be. Flavors of cherry and plum are level, long and tasty, and that pretty much describes the finish as well. Honest, true Chilean Cabernet. Imported by Vidaleco International, LLC. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**89 Emiliana 2009 Natura Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$11.** Dusty berry aromas and a touch of leather and earth make for a really attractive bouquet, especially for a wine of this level. The palate is forward and pure, with bright fruit flavors, floral notes, and lasting vanilla and cream accents. Smooth and 100% pleasant. A winner among value Cabs. Imported by Banfi Vintners. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**89 Miguel Torres 2008 Las Mulas Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$13.** A really nice and pure bargain-priced Cabernet, which is still what Chile excels at. The nose offers bold black cherry and a little rubber, while the palate is tight, pure and in great condition. Black fruit flavors with some peppery darkness is what it's all about. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**89 Viña Casablanca 2008 Cefiro Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$10.** A totally correct but well-priced Cab that brings pretty much everything the textbook calls for. The nose features graphite, berry and smoky wood, while the mouthfeel is spot-on and made better by ripe, toasty berry, chocolate and spice flavors. A definite winner at its price point. Imported by Carolina Wine Brands USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**88 Echeverria 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Curicó Valley); \$9.** Big, dark, earthy and rubbery, with hefty black fruit on the

nose and palate. A generous wine with toasty blackberry, cassis and a sprinkle of chocolate, and then a smooth finish. Among value-priced wines from anywhere in the world this is more than one should expect. It's really a nice Cab. Imported by T. Edward Wines Ltd. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**88 Luis Felipe Edwards 2008 Family Selection Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$15.** Savory and oaky, but with a nice mesquite scent and also some bacon and big black fruit aromas. Rich and voluminous in the mouth, with smoky, dark, roasted berry flavors. Savory, spicy and pretty big on the finish, and bullish as a whole. Imported by Admiral Imports. —M.S.

**88 Luis Felipe Edwards 2007 Rosa Blanca Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$12.** Earthy and nice on the nose, with a spot of rubber. The palate shows choppy acidity but good black cherry, herbal berry and pepper flavors. Light to medium as Cabs go, with spice and verve to the finish. Additional notes of olive, citrus and toast elevate the character. Imported by Admiral Imports. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**88 Odfjell 2008 Armador Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$12.** A pure and proper Cabernet with aromas of balsam wood, toast, berry and cassis. There's some power and kick on the palate, but the overall feel is good. So are the flavors of cassis, raspberry and plum. Spicy on the finish, with a bit of piquant heat. Imported by Select Fine Wine. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**88 Santa Alicia 2007 Anke Blend 1 Cabernet Franc-Petit Verdot (Maipo Valley); \$12.** Very fresh and forward, from the nose of cola, herbs and leafy red fruit aromas to the moderately intense palate of clean, interesting raspberry, plum and currant flavors. Mild oak adds a bit of vanilla and caramel, but mostly what you take away is a sense of freshness. Cab Franc and Petit Verdot seem happily married. Imported by Halby Marketing. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**88 Santa Alicia 2009 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$9.** A good deal in value-priced Cabernet. Aromas of mocha, chocolate and ripe berry fruit are well molded, and the palate is warm, rich and full of clean, tasty raspberry and plum fruit accented by



another dash of mocha. Fruity and thick, and with a natural oak flavor. Imported by Halby Marketing. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**88 Undurraga 2007 Sibarisa Reserva Especial Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$15.** Smoky and crusty on the nose, but not that deep or dark in the mouth. The emphasis is on red fruits, freshness and pop, while the flavors are zesty and lean toward red cherry and red plum, with a spicy accent. Pepper and more spice work the finish. Imported by Undurraga USA. —M.S.

**88 Viña Bisquit 2008 La Joya Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$13.** Liberally oaked, thus there's sawdust and spice to accent the berry fruit aromas. Tannic and full-bodied, and tasting of roasted black fruits with a generous sprinkling of baking spices. Chunky, tannic and arguably a little saucy/soupy on the finish. Best if you like big, roasted, chubby wines. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. —M.S.

**87 Agustinos 2007 Reserva Maitén Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Aconcagua Valley); \$13.** Aromas of tree bark, vanilla and herbs mix with peppery red fruit scents, while the palate is comfortable and herbal, with plum and dry oak notes. Peppery on the finish, and overall this is a nice but standard Chilean Cabernet that should strike most as being familiar. Imported by Winesellers Ltd. —M.S.

**87 Aresti 2009 Estate Selection Cabernet Sauvignon (Curicó Valley); \$11.** A nice, simple everyday Cabernet is what this is. The nose is sweet and smooth, with slightly candied red fruit aromas. There's some snap and good vibrations on the palate along with flavors of raspberry and red currant. Simple, clean and balanced. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**87 MontGras 2008 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (Colchagua Valley); \$12.** Leather, horse hide, spice, smoked meat and rich berry fruit aromas make for a thick, chunky bouquet. The palate brings full, grating tannins and mouthfilling extract as well as flavors of roasted berry and integrated spice. Herbal and oaky on the finish, with bacon fat as an aftertaste. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**87 O. Fournier 2008 Urban Cabernet Sauvignon (Maule Valley); \$11.** Floral, fresh and just big enough to make it worth a go. There's a bit of everything to this nice-priced Cab, including leafiness, red fruit, toast, chocolate and cassis. There's also a bit of heat and burn to the finish, but with food that won't be noticeable. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

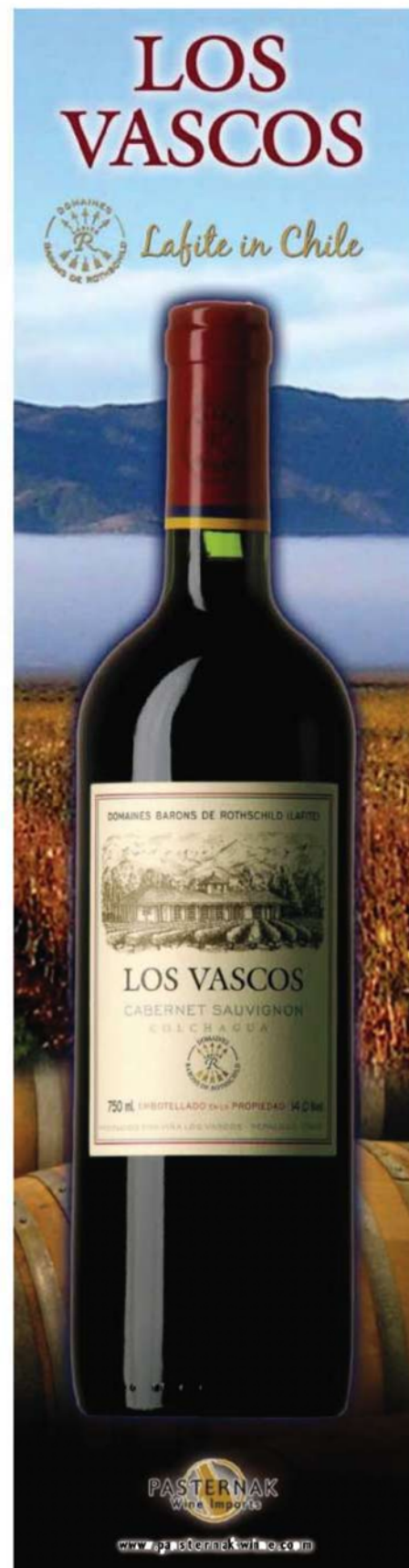
**87 Viña Requingua 2008 Toro de Piedra Cabernet Sauvignon (Curicó Valley); \$13.** Purple as they come, with minty, savory, charred aromas that dominate. Airing tones things down, revealing blackberry, spice, butter and creaminess along with big tannins, bite, clamp and weight. Among roasted, peppery big boys, this treads the line deftly and is worth the money. Imported by Puerto Viejo Wines. —M.S.

**86 Lucky7 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rapel Valley); \$10.** Slightly herbal and leafy on the first pass, but airing shows a good mix of olive, creamy blackberry fruit and buttery oak. The flavor profile brings candied cherry/berry fruit and an herbal touch, and the finish is juicy and feels right. Standard but more than respectable at this price point. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**86 Odfjell 2008 Babor Cabernet Sauvignon (Maipo Valley); \$8.** A good \$8 wine with snap, crackle and pop. The nose brings black cherry and saucy aromas, while the palate is sweet, a bit medicinal and just a little herbal. There's a creamy sweetness to the finish and another modest dose of herbs and medicinal-ity. Any faults should be offset by the cost. Imported by Select Fine Wine. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**86 San Elias 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Valley); \$9.** An opening of dried leaves, spice and berry fruit is pretty good and authentic, while the palate feel seems right given the wine's price and structure. Flavors of cherry, raspberry and plum are roasted and mildly herbal but come with proper feel and follow through. Good for under \$10. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**86 Simone 2008 Special Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Maule Valley); \$13.** Starts out chunky and mulchy before it finds its stride with plum and roasted berry aromas. The palate has a standard, semirich feel and





roasted plum and spice flavors. A bit oaky and resinous on the finish, but perfectly drinkable as inexpensive Cabernet goes. Imported by Simone International. —M.S.

**86 Viña Requingua 2008 Puerto Viejo Cabernet Sauvignon (Curicó Valley); \$10.** Rooty and sweet smelling, much like a root beer soda mixed with smoked meats and spice. The flavor profile brings roasted black fruit and hoisin sauce, while the finish is dark and ends with coffee-like bitterness. Good for everyday consumption. Imported by Puerto Viejo Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**85 Casa Lapostolle 2008 Casa Cabernet Sauvignon (Rapel Valley); \$13.** Quite raisiny, with an overweight personality conveyed through the nose. The palate is tannic, with black cherry and cola flavors thickened up by a full dose of raisin. Very sweet on the finish, but also hard and baked. Still reasonably good but it's less well balanced than in previous vintages. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

**85 Crucero 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Colchagua Valley); \$10.** A bit narrow and medicinal, but overall this Cab delivers reasonably good cherry and herbal berry aromas and flavors along with some oak, coconut, citric acid and earth. It's a touch muddled and all over the map, but for \$10 it's a pretty good wine. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**85 Quasar 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (Curicó Valley); \$6.** Admittedly the early aromas are gaseous and rubbery, but the mouthfeel is fine and the flavors of cassis, fresh tomato and cocoa powder are about as good as any reasonable person could expect for \$6. A competent wine that's above average for the price. Imported by CW Import. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

## CARMENÈRE

**91 Casa Lapostolle 2008 Casa Carmenère (Rapel Valley); \$13.** One of the best value-priced, big and rich wines you're likely to find. The nose impresses with potent blackberry, cedar and marzipan aromas, and the palate bridges the gap between power and elegance. Tastes great, with herbal black cherry and cola leading the way. Very ripe but really well made. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**90 Viña La Rosa 2008 La Capitana Barrel Reserve Carmenère (Cachapoal Valley); \$17.** Big, roasted and concentrated, with mocha, black fruit and cola on the nose. The palate is chewy but right for the variety, and the flavors are sweet, pure and tilt toward black plum and blackberry. Chocolatey on the finish, with density and meatiness. A good vehicle for getting to know Carmenère. Imported by MJM Imports. —M.S.

**89 Arboleda 2008 Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$19.** A strong, smoky set of aromas gets this going in the proper direction. There's also spice, earth, herbal aromas and leather to give it variety. The palate is deep and big, with blackberry, smoked meat and richness. Smooth on the finish, with black olive and additional herbal accents. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

**89 La Playa 2007 Axel Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$20.** A warm, earthy and very well-balanced wine with a lot of varietal Carmenère character but polish and poise as well. The palate offers creamy, properly candied berry and marshmallow flavors, and then spice and oak-based coconut takeover. A vivid, structured wine that puts the variety in a positive light. Imported by Cabernet Corporation. —M.S.

**89 Viña Bisquertt 2007 Ecos de Rulo Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$19.** Very good Carmenère with requisite tea, herbal and bold berry aromas. The palate is just right in that it's neither heavy nor sharp, and the flavors of cola, burnt brown sugar and roasted berries are smooth and deep. Finishes with notes of coffee, herbs and sweet fruits as it hits the target close to the bull's eye. Imported by Prestige Wine Group. —M.S.

**88 Emiliana 2009 Natura Carmenère (Central Valley); \$11.** Sweet and smoky to start with, and with its mild roasted nose it draws you in. The palate is big, boisterous and generous, but also under control as it delivers pure boysenberry, blackberry and chocolate flavors. Toasty and long, and impressive for an \$11 wine. Imported by Banfi Vintners. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**88 Luis Felipe Edwards 2008 Family Selection Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$15.** Roasted, warm and rich, which is what we want from our Carmenère. The palate is dense and smacks down with mellow tannins,

while flavors of roasted berry, smoked meats and herbs are textbook. There's some heat and weight to the wine, but overall it's big, solid and likable. Imported by Admiral Imports. —M.S.

**88 Montes 2008 Alpha Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$24.** Starts with typical aromas of olive, herbs, spice and pepper, and there's berry fruit underneath. The palate is racier and more staunch than the 2007, with cherry, olive, plum and a hint of raisin. Tightly formed, with a lively DNA and a tangy finish touched up by cocoa. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

**87 Espiritu de Chile 2009 Carmenère (Central Valley); \$9.** Rich, roasted and defined by rugged black fruit and black olive aromas. Nice acidity renders it fit as opposed to heavy and overextracted. Flavors of wild berry and coffee are good, and the finish shows mint chocolate chip and snap. Very good for the price. Imported by Cecchetti Racke. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**87 Lucky7 2009 Carmenère (Rapel Valley); \$10.** Cola, licorice and blackberry all dance together on the bouquet, which is big and magnetic. The palate is dark and deep, with lush, potent berry fruit, chocolate and spice flavors. Rugged, full-bodied and strong more than elegant and refined. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**87 MontGras 2009 Reserva Carmenère (Colchagua Valley); \$12.** On the nose it's sweet, smooth and seductive, but that's where the sweet nothings end. The palate is super concentrated and intense, with almost overpowering blackberry and boysenberry fruit. A high-octane red if there ever was one, and that's all hammered home on the warm, menthol-laden finish. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**86 Aresti 2009 Estate Selection Carmenère (Curicó Valley); \$11.** Foresty, earthy aromas are dark and dusty, and the palate is mammoth and doesn't hold much back. The flavors of blackberry and black currant are deep and rich, and the fruit plays out long and chocolatey on the finish. Simple and steady red wine with plenty of bulk, body and flavor. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.S.



**86 Chono 2007 Reserva Carmenère (Maipo Valley); \$13.** Grapey and thick at first, with sweet berry aromas that seem more generic than specific. The palate has some grit and grab, while flavors of plum and berry smack down with bitter herbs and black pepper. More pepper rides the finish along with mocha and coffee. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. —M.S.

**86 Viña Requingua 2008 Puerto Viejo Carmenère (Curicó Valley); \$10.** Herbal and slightly volatile on the nose before it settles on meaty, herbal fruit aromas. The palate stores flavors of cocoa, carob, olive and herbal black fruit, and while it shows some stemminess it ends on a firm plane with herbs, toast, earth and pepper. Imported by Puerto Viejo Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

## PINOT NOIR

**89 Montes 2009 Limited Selection Pinot Noir (Casablanca Valley); \$20.** Smells good and true, with dry spice and catchy red-fruit aromas. The palate is solid but not at all heavy, with lively red berry and exotic spice flavors. Lengthy and pure through the long finish, and overall this is the best Montes Pinot we've come across and also one of the best from Chile. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

**87 Santa Carolina 2009 Reserva Pinot Noir (Maule Valley); \$13.** This is yet another wine from the Santa Carolina portfolio that shows vast improvement over previous vintages. The nose offers perfectly nice and easy raspberry and cherry aromas, and there's nothing off about the palate, which gives warm black cherry, plum and buttery flavors that morph into cocoa on the finish. Imported by QW Wine Experts. —M.S.

**86 Quintay 2009 Clava Pinot Noir (Casablanca Valley); \$13.** Light and airy, with red fruit and tea aromas. The palate is fairly acidic but not harsh or sour; flavors of pie cherry are balanced and sweetened by caramel, yet the finish is lean and quick, with citrus peel and zest. More of a lighter-bodied refresher with just a spot of oak. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. —M.S.

**85 Cono Sur 2009 Pinot Noir (Central Valley); \$10.** Aromas of cherry and

raspberry bring a slight earthy stemminess, while the palate is light and zesty, with semisharp plum and pie cherry fruit flavors and a dash of red sucking candy. Medium-long at best on the finish, with citrus, tang and pepper notes. Imported by Vineyard Brands. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**85 William Cole 2009 Columbine Special Reserve Pinot Noir (Casablanca Valley); \$15.** Opens with heavy aromas of earth, compost and baked fruit. The palate has a corresponding heaviness and sweet, roasted, buttery black-fruit flavors. Sticky and oaky on the finish, with lasting sweetness and some bitterness. Chunky and clunky, but not a bad wine. Imported by Global Vineyard Importers. —M.S.

## SYRAH/SHIRAZ

**90 Viña Casablanca 2008 Nimbus Estate Single Vineyard Syrah (Casablanca Valley); \$18.** Three years running and this wine has been impressive since its debut in 2006. The nose is dark and sweet, maybe a touch pasty, but loaded with black fruit aromas. The palate is staunch and secure, with pronounced but proper acidity leading to bright, fresh blackberry and cassis flavors. Toasty and chocolaty on the finish, and impressive as a whole. Drink now through 2011. Imported by Carolina Wine Brands USA. —M.S.

**88 Chono 2008 Reserva Syrah (Elqui Valley); \$13.** Aromas of sweet black cherry, cough drop and smoke work well together and draw you in. The palate is full and pretty smooth, with black plum, blackberry and creamy oak flavors. It's just spicy and interesting enough to earn a Best Buy recommendation. Best if you like sweet, ripe Syrahs. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**88 Luis Felipe Edwards 2008 Family Selection Gran Reserva Shiraz (Colchagua Valley); \$15.** Toasty and sweet on the nose, with burnt brown sugar, leather, bacon and black fruit. The palate is rich and extracted but not overly heavy, and the flavors of dense, rich blackberry and clove are nice and warm. A little roasted on the finish but overall this is good warm-climate Syrah. Imported by Admiral Imports. —M.S.





**87 Arboleda 2008 Syrah (Aconcagua Valley); \$19.** A little soapy on the nose, with air freshener, cherry candy and soft berry aromas. The palate follows what the nose offers with richness and soft tannins along with blackberry and blueberry flavors. Not very spicy for a Syrah; it's more of a baked, toasty, generic red wine that tastes good but isn't complex or varietal in nature. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

**87 Rayun 2008 Syrah (Rapel Valley); \$8.** If you don't mind a bit of herbal character, this is a nice, easy drinking Syrah with raspberry and cherry aromas and timidity as opposed to a forceful attack. Zesty berry fruit rules the palate, which finishes in round, roasted form. Nice but sort of generic. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**87 Viña La Rosa 2008 La Capitana Barrel Reserve Shiraz (Cachapoal Valley); \$17.** Starts out with proprietary aromas of clove, spice and cinnamon, and in the mouth it's a tannic grabber with forcefulness as well as ripe, sweet, menthol-infused berry flavors. Falls off somewhat on the finish, where butter and candy come in. Heavy and dark but still good for a New World Syrah. Imported by MJM Imports. —M.S.

**86 Santa Rita 2008 120 Syrah (Central Valley); \$8.** By no means sophisticated or complex, but if you want a ripe, lush, creamy wine with a ton of sweetness, black fruit and good balance, 120 Syrah makes the grade. The palate is smooth and lactic, with creamy blackberry, brown sugar and soft tannins. Rich and pure as they come for under \$10. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**85 Santa Alicia 2008 Reserva Shiraz (Maipo Valley); \$9.** A little earthy and leafy on the nose and palate, but we like the wine's balance and saturation as well as its flavors of herbal cherry and berry. Finishes more roasted and warm, with kick carrying it toward conclusion. Grabby and leafy but good for \$9. Imported by Halby Marketing. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**85 Simone 2008 Winemaker's Collection Syrah (Colchagua Valley); \$15.** Starts out kind of murky and pasty, with gummy black fruit and compost aromas. Airing helps it escape that shell, and in the mouth there's rubbery blueberry flavors mixed with mildly tart

rhubarb and bramble. Good enough, but doesn't do much to push the envelope that is Chilean Syrah. Imported by Simone International. —M.S.

## BLENDED RED WINES

**94 Emiliana 2006 G (Colchagua Valley); \$92.** Dark, dense, spicy and full of everything nice, including cola, berry, earth and richness. The palate has ideal ripeness and power, and the flavors are a clever mix of light herbs, spice, chocolate and blasting berry. Long and sultry on the finish, with tobacco and immense complexity. One of Chile's very best wines; a blend of Syrah, Carmenère, Cabernet and Merlot. Imported by Banfi Vintners. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

**93 Casa Lapostolle 2007 Clos Apalta (Colchagua Valley); \$80.** Outstanding as always. Right from the first take it has an elevated sense of being. The nose is rich, warm and deeply fruited, with balsam wood and lemony notes. It's deep as a coal mine on the palate, with herbal, tobacco and leather accents sprucing up serious berry fruit flavors. Minty and sly on the finish, and lovely overall. Drink now through 2016. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. **Editors' Choice.** —M.S.

**92 Casa Lapostolle 2006 Borobo (Chile); \$80.** A kitchen-sink blend of five grapes produces an excellent result. Borobo blends Pinot Noir and Syrah with your standard Bordeaux varieties, and the finished product is minty and rich, with coconut, shoe polish and crusty aromas in front of syrupy, roasted flavors of brown sugar and baked berries. Toast and mocha are the finishing notes. A chunky wine to drink now. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

**90 Viña Tabalí 2007 Reserva Especial (Limarí Valley); \$23.** This winery, part of the San Pedro group, is on the right path as its wines have improved in recent vintages. This particular wine marks a high-water point; the nose mixes dry wood notes, leather, herbal berry and even some fine aged cheese. The palate is tight and forceful, with cassis, cherry and cola flavors. Powerful but poised. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Southern Wine Group. —M.S.

**88 Crucero 2006 Gran Crucero Limited Edition (Colchagua Valley); \$27.** The opening of tobacco, lemon peel, floral notes

and mixed black fruits is alluring, while the palate is crisp and acidic but still fresh and good. Herbal berry fruit flavors with citric hints work the flavor profile, and the finish smacks down with firm tannins and bite. Nice aromas and flavors but the mouthfeel needs some work. 55% Carmenère with 30% Syrah and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

**88 Korta 2007 Gran Reserva (Lontué Valley); \$25.** Briary and a little hot on the nose, with dust and coffee aromas. The palate is regular in size, with tangy, semisharp currant, raspberry and plum flavors in front of a toasty, mildly minty finish. More snappy and lively than dense and deep. Drink now. Imported by MJM Imports. —M.S.

**88 La Playa 2007 Claret Block Selection Estate Reserve (Colchagua Valley); \$11.** Cleanly made and not terribly complicated, but with good fruit character, balance and all the freshness one could reasonably ask for. The nose has cherry, cassis, dry oak and herbal notes, while it tastes of cola and cherry. Fruity, snappy and juicy wine. A blend of Carmenère, Cabernet, Petit Verdot and Syrah. Imported by Cabernet Corporation. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**87 Santa Alicia 2007 Anke Blend 2 Carménère-Petit Verdot-Shiraz (Maipo Valley); \$12.** Slightly leafy and damp on the nose, but dense. The palate is solid, with dark cherry and raspberry flavors along with herbal, drying notes and a touch of late bitterness. Spicy late, with coffee on the finish. Carmenère, Petit Verdot and Shiraz is the blend. Imported by Halby Marketing. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

**86 Viña La Rosa 2007 Cuvée Don Reca Limited Release (Cachapoal Valley); \$25.** Salad dressing, vinegar and a heavy herbal blast greet you on the nose. The palate is chunky and thick in feel, but the flavors mirror the nose with green notes, herbs and burnt coffee. Has its merits but there's no escaping the fact that this is an herbal, roasted red blend. Imported by MJM Imports. —M.S.



# CHILE WHITE WINES

## CHARDONNAY

### 89 Casa Lapostolle 2008 Cuvée Alexandre Atalayas Vineyard Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$24.

Smooth, tropical and pure on the nose, with pineapple as the lead fruit. The palate is solid and full-bodied, with pineapple, papaya, honey and toasted flavors. Not "oaky" but it is well oaked, and thus the finish is warm, toasty and creamy. Drink now. Imported by Moët Hennessy USA. —M.S.

### 87 Arboleda 2008 Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$17.

Smoky smelling and toasty, with peach, melon and cider aromas. The body is solid and held together by nice acidity, while the flavors of banana, melon and citrus are sweet but not quite candied in nature. Pretty much your standard, textbook, well-made Chardonnay. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

### 86 Cono Sur 2008 Visión Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$15.

Toast, butter and tropical fruit aromas are all typical of Chile, but there's a touch of saline and minerality as well. Lemony and tangy in the mouth, with a juicy, acidic feel that's a bit like Chablis. Only trouble is, it finishes bland and pithy. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —M.S.

### 86 Veramonte 2008 Reserva Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$11.

Toast, buttercup and baked apple aromas give it some richness and sweetness to start, and the palate is creamy but well balanced, with toasty apple, peach and vanilla flavors. Solid and creamy on the finish, with tropical afterburners. Drink soon before it fades. Imported by Huneus Vintners. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

### 85 Aresti 2009 Estate Selection Chardonnay (Curicó Valley); \$11.

A touch oily on the nose but that's balanced by tropical fruit, pear and apple aromas. The palate has a chunky feel and weight to it along with melon and apple flavors. And it finishes the same, rounding out an inoffensive, standard package. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. —M.S.

### 85 Cono Sur 2009 Chardonnay (Central Valley); \$10.

Melon, apple and pear aromas are far from complex or elevated, but the wine does smell reasonably good. And the palate is wet and fruity, with sweet, slightly candied mango, melon and lemon flavors. Innocuous and like a thousand others from Chile, but for \$10 one can't really complain. Imported by Vineyard Brands. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

### 85 Emiliana 2008 Novas Limited Selection Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley); \$17.

Plump, sweet and tropical on the nose, but also not that focused or powerful. The palate is flat in feel and a bit sticky, with vague, candied flavors of papaya and melon. There's even an Animal Cracker quality to the finish. Good but not great. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.S.

## SAUVIGNON BLANC

### 87 Viña Maipo 2009 Gran Devoción Sauvignon Blanc (Casablanca Valley); \$14.

An authentic Chilean Sauvignon Blanc with celery and green-bean aromas along with oceanic salty notes. Zesty on the palate and fresh, with snappy citrus and green apple flavors, and then driving on the finish due to bright acids and citric flavors. Imported by Banfi Vintners. —M.S.

### 85 Lucky7 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Maule Valley); \$10.

Lime aromas and modest minerality are proper given its origin, but it turns softer and sweeter the more time it airs out. The palate is fairly round, with lemon-lime and pineapple flavors. Citric if a bit pithy on the finish. Fine but average. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

# SOUTH AFRICA

## PINOTAGE

### 91 Diemersfontein 2008 Pinotage (Wellington); \$20.

The label reads "The Original coffee/chocolate Pinotage" and boy are they right! This is pure decadent bliss with intense aromas of crème de cacao, raspberry chocolate sauce and coffee granules along with hints of hickory bacon and tobacco. The mouth is huge, ripe and full, with a balanced structure and gorgeous flavors of juicy mashed black raspberries, plum flesh, sweet smoked meat and

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mocha that leads strongly throughout the lengthy finish. With 500 cases imported, this is a Pinotage worth searching out and trying. Imported by Cape Ardor LLC. **Editors' Choice.** —L.B.

**89 Neil Ellis 2008 Pinotage (Stellenbosch); \$19.** Here's a surprisingly easy-to-drink Pinotage from established producer Neil Ellis with a gorgeous satiny texture and grainy but approachable tannins. Smoke, cured meat, red berries and sweet woody spice unfold on the nose and mouth, with a long cocoa-kissed finish sealing the deal nicely. A good choice for newbies and lovers of the variety. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —L.B.

**86 MAN Vintners 2008 Pinotage (Coastal Region); \$11.** Cherry-centric throughout with supporting elements of wild forestry, fennel, sweet spice and blood orange. The acidity is prominent but balanced within the round mouthfeel showing gripping tannins and an overall firm structure. It's approachable now and would pair well with fruit-stewed chicken or pork chops. Imported by Vineyard Brands. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

**85 Doolhof 2008 Dark Lady of the Labyrinth Pinotage (Wellington); \$20.** Rustic and earthy with smoke, bramble, rubber, wild berries and balsamic reduction in the forefront. The mouth offers more berry and ripe plum notes, leading to a sweeter mocha dominant finish. Drink now. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

**85 Painted Wolf 2008 Pinotage (Swartland); \$15.** A straightforward and vibrant Pinotage with notes of red cherry, raspberry, clove and cocoa. The palate is lively and fresh with medium acidity and a firm structure. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —L.B.

## SHIRAZ

**92 Hartenberg 2006 The Stork Shiraz (Stellenbosch); \$79.** While this is certainly on the higher end of South African Shiraz price points, it's worth the investment. The intense bouquet is loaded with rich dark cherry, raspberry, sweet spice and small wild strawberries. All-spice and pepper dominate the creamy mouth, with opulent flavors of meaty plum, roasted espresso and black cherry guts. Full and powerful in the mouth with a strong vanilla-

accented finish. Delicious now but worthy of cellar time as well. Imported by Terry Seitz. —L.B.

**91 Muratie 2006 Ronnie Melck A Tribute Shiraz (Simonsberg-Stellenbosch); \$60.** With 16 months spent in 100% new French oak, this is a powerhouse of a wine. At first a bit overripe on the nose with notes of berry jam, kirsch, cigar box spice and a hint of smoke, the mouth shows similar concentrated dark fruit flavors but is lifted by supporting acidity, aggressive tannins and a tight structure. Dark chocolate-covered roasted espresso beans flood the long finish, and while the wine is good now, with five-plus years in the cellar it will be stellar. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. **Cellar Selection.** —L.B.

**90 Joubert-Tradauw 2006 R62 Syrah (Tradouw); \$40.** With the R62 standing for the famous Route 62 in South Africa, this is a beautiful unfiltered Syrah that's naturally fermented and matured 16 months in Burgundian oak. Sweet spice, cocoa nibs, raspberry and balsamic-drizzled strawberries abound, with fine-grained tannins leading masterfully into the cocoa-dusted finish. Complex, balanced and delicious now, but can be cellared for two to three years. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

**90 Thelema 2006 Shiraz (Stellenbosch); \$37.** It's unfortunate that only 56 cases of this wine were imported, so be sure to snag it when you see it. Intense and powerful on the nose, with attractive forest, licorice, tea leaves and menthol adding complexity to the small red berries and plum skins. The velvety texture and firm structure lead nicely into the mocha-flavored finish, with flecks of white pepper gleaming through on the very end. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

**89 MAN Vintners 2008 Shiraz (Coastal Region); \$11.** Smoke and roobios tea dominate the bouquet, with accents of raspberry and cocoa. The mouth is more of the same with soft notes of black plum guts and berry preserves fleshing it out. The texture is like crushed velvet with assertive tannins and structured acidity. Drinkable now, though could age for another year or two. Imported by Vineyard Brands. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

**87 Brampton 2008 Shiraz (Stellenbosch); \$14.** With 14 months in oak,

there's some beautiful mocha and clove spice throughout that integrates beautifully with the dark cherry, bramble, licorice and meaty notes on the nose and palate. The texture is creamy and the flavors full, with firm tannins and a good kick of black pepper on the long finish. Could use some time to balance out; try in a year or two. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

**87 DeMorgenzon 2008 DMZ Shiraz (Stellenbosch); \$15.** A bright, tasty Shiraz loaded with flavors of chocolate-covered cherry, raspberry compote and integrated sweet spice throughout. Balanced with a medium weight, structured tannins and a juicy plum-infused finish. Approachable now and great for shell steak or lighter game stews. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

**87 Solms-Delta 2006 Solms Hegewisch Shiraz (Western Cape); \$40.** With a confectioned finish and sweet mocha notes on the nose, this might have seen a little too much wood in its 16 months in new French oak. Lovely notes of small red berries, sous bois and pepper appear in the bouquet, while sanguine notes overpower the soft mouth. Overall, it's easy to drink but a little disjointed. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

**86 Neil Ellis 2008 Sincerely Shiraz (Western Cape); \$14.** A solidly made Shiraz from power-producer Neil Ellis. Wild strawberries, white pepper and game notes appear on the nose, while red plum and sweet spice fill out the palate. Balanced acidity and dusty tannins with a satiny texture make this an easy-to-enjoy, ready-to-drink wine. Try pairing with loin lamb chops or wild boar stew. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —L.B.

## CHARDONNAY

**90 Rustenberg 2008 Chardonnay (Stellenbosch); \$20.** A gorgeous and well-balanced Chard that's on par with some of the more popular offerings from other notable regions. Elegant and expressive with butter, toasted brioche, red apple skins and almond paste unfolding in the bouquet while flavors of baked apples and pear lead through to the marzipan-infused finish. Full and intense but not fat or overdone; drink now with stuffed lobster or thermidor. Imported by Cape Classics. **Editors' Choice.** —L.B.



**88 DeMorgenzon 2008 DMZ Chardonnay (Western Cape); \$15.**

The nose of this Chard is so lively and welcoming with accents of lilac, jasmine, white peach slices and clementine. Matured in barrel for 10 months, the wine's palate offers more intense, mature flavors of peaches and cream, ginger and supporting tropical acidity. Well structured with a defined and evolving finish, it takes you from citrus to fresh peach to vanilla wooded spice. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

**88 Paul Cluver 2008 Chardonnay (Elgin); \$16.**

With only 500 cases imported, snag this wine when you can and drink it now. Ripe and nuanced with aromas and flavors of fresh peaches, soft white florals, orange cream-sicle and almond skin. Full and creamy with a lingering vanilla-kissed finish and an overall decadent impression. Imported by Vinnovative Imports. —L.B.

**86 Muratie 2008 Isabella Chardonnay (Stellenbosch); \$24.**

Medium-intense aromas of pear, red apple skin and delicate sweet spice appear on the nose, while accents of toast and limey citrus unfold in the mouth. Vibrant and easy to drink with a clean, softly wooded finish. Try with grilled steak fish like swordfish or mahi mahi. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —L.B.

**86 Thelema 2008 Chardonnay (Stellenbosch); \$25.**

A touch overripe and indulgent, this Chard needs a little more vibrancy to enliven its heavy character. Mushy peaches, banana and mealy cantaloupe emanate from the bouquet while flavors of buttered popcorn and oakly spice dominate the palate. Try with a heavy cream-based dish to downplay the wine's own richness. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

## CHENIN BLANC

**90 Post House 2008 Chenin Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$22.**

A gorgeous wine with so many layers and components that all work magically together to produce a harmonious and well-balanced Chenin Blanc. The bouquet has assertive herbal aromas of cloverfields and menthol supported by notes of baked pear lightly drizzled with butterscotch sauce. The palate is rich and intense, like toasted spicecake topped with grilled peaches and crushed hazelnuts. The

creamy texture and long finish seal the deal. Imported by Terry Seitz. —L.B.

**88 Bellingham 2008 Citrus Grove Chenin Blanc (Franschhoek); \$13.**

Here's a big, rich Chenin boasting developed notes of honeydew, tropical fruit, peach preserves and soft spice. Medium-full in the mouth with good balance and a lengthy finish. The palate shows a hint of petrol along with fresh red apple slices sprinkled with cinnamon and honey. With 2,500 cases imported, drink now and, at this price, often. Imported by Cape Wine Ventures. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

**87 Juno 2009 Café Juno Chenin Blanc (Western Cape); \$9.**

Beautiful mineral aromas unfold on the nose with accents of bay leaves and stone fruit shining through. The mouth is round but not overdone or flabby, with tangerine citrus keeping the rich flavors in check. A great bistro wine to pair well with lighter lunchtime fare such as salads and panini. Drink now. Imported by Confluence Wine Importers. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

**87 Morgenhof 2008 Estate Chenin Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$19.**

With only 1,500 cases produced, this beautiful estate Chenin Blanc has lots of character and complexity. The nose boasts stony minerality, white peach and baby's breath florals while the palate shows its sweeter side with honey, pressed peaches and tangerine oil. Balanced and full with a robust body and lingering finish. Imported by Terry Seitz. —L.B.

**87 Raats Family 2009 Original Unwooded Chenin Blanc (Coastal Region); \$13.**

So fresh and inviting with lovely sweet pea and grass florals alongside soft notes of ripe nectarine and melon. The prickly mouth is loaded with orange oil citrus and a hint of banana unfolds on the long finish. A very clean and satisfying hand-picked Chenin Blanc that's a versatile wine for food pairing. Imported by Cape Classics. —L.B.

**85 Vinum Africa 2008 Chenin Blanc (Stellenbosch); \$12.**

There's a nice underlying minerality to this wine, complemented by aromas and flavors of crisp red apple, melon and lime oil. The mouth is round and light at the same time, but the alcohol is slightly pronounced on the finish. Drink now. Imported by Vinnovative Imports. —L.B.



## SAUVIGNON BLANC

**86 Bampton 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$11.** Delicate floral aromas of peony and sweetgrass are supported by notes of citrus peel and sea water in the nose. The mouth offers subtle hard white peach and green banana flavors with accents of fresh herbs. Clean and well-balanced with an easygoing attitude and a lively finish. Imported by Cape Classics. **Best Buy.** —L.B.

**85 Durbanville Hills 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Durbanville); \$11.** Some feline essence aromas appear on the nose with supporting notes of tart gooseberry and wet, dewey grass. Citrus dominates the creamy mouth with accents of cantaloupe leading through to the long finish. Try with hearty chicken salads or whole grilled fish. Imported by Aveniu Brands, Inc. —L.B.

**85 Porcupine Ridge 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$13.** Delicate aromas of lemon chiffon, underripe nectarine and a touch of green apple on the nose. The palate is citrus-dominant with a round but prickly mouth and a crisp finish. Very refreshing and approachable; drink now. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —L.B.

## VIOGNIER

**89 Spice Route 2008 Viognier (Coastal Region); \$23.** While this Viognier starts off rich and ripe with aromas of stone fruit, soft oaky spice and tropical citrus, the mouth is fresh and zippy with notes of tangerine citrus and apricot. Medium bodied and balanced with a long finish kissed with clove. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —L.B.

**87 Goats do Roam Wine Co. 2008 Goats in Villages Viognier (Paarl); \$14.** A vibrant, easy-to-drink and attractively priced Viognier. Melon, pear and delicate citrus oil flesh out the creamy mouth. The finish lingers slightly but is clean and refreshing. Drink now. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —L.B.

## WHITE BLENDS

**88 Juno 2008 Art House Viognier-Chenin Blanc-Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$16.** The bouquet of this wine is immediately attractive and remarkably vibrant, offering plenty of honeydew, Anjou pear and fresh pineapple accented by notes of pink peony. Well balanced and medium weight with bracing acidity and a clean, peach pit-infused finish. An easy-drinking white perfect for casual outdoor dining or sunny afternoons. Imported by Confluence Wine Importers. —L.B.

**85 KWV 2008 Roodeberg White (Western Cape); \$14.** Crisp and fruit-forward with notes of wood-grilled peaches, mango and tropical acidity. The aggressive acidity and tangy finish liven up the round and somewhat heavy mouthfeel. Drink now. Imported by Opici Import Company. —L.B.

## PROVENCE ROSÉ WINES

**92 Château d'Esclans 2008 Garrus Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$90.** The top rosé from Sacha Lichine's Esclans estate, this is wood aged and the flavors of wood are apparent, if subtle. The wine has a great smooth texture, the fruit well integrated, showing richness as well as elegance. Not classic Provence, but certainly impressive. Imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

**92 Domaine Gavoty 2009 Cuvée Clarendon Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$22.** The top wine from Gavoty, this is impressive. It has a fine structure, enveloped by rich fruits, soft apple skins and red cherry tannins and a tight layer of acidity. It could age for a year. Imported by Garber and Co. **Editors' Choice.** —R.V.

**91 Château les Valentines 2009 Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$25.** Finely balanced wine, showing the warmth of 2009 as well as keeping bright peach, pink grapefruit and red berry fruit flavors. The wine shows lively final acidity for a delicious aftertaste. Imported by Potomac Selections. —R.V.

**91 Château Sainte-Marguerite 2009 Grande Réserve Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$22.** Rich, full-bodied wine with a serious nature. It impresses with its ripe red fruit, the layer of caramel well integrated with acidity. The feel is soft, but certainly dry, giving an impressive structured aftertaste. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. **Editors' Choice.** —R.V.

**91 Domaines Ott 2009 Château Romassan Rosé (Bandol); \$43.** As befits a Bandol, this rosé has a good depth of flavor, rich and smoothly textured with acidity integrated into a serious and complex wine. The structure and acidity suggest a wine that could age for 2–3 years. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. **Cellar Selection.** —R.V.

**90 Château de Léoube 2009 Secret de Léoube Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$24.** The attractive presentation, with handwriting directly on to the bottle, is followed by an equally attractive wine, ripe and full in character, but balanced with good acidity. There is a final vanilla burst. Imported by Jordan Imports. —R.V.

**90 Château la Mascaronne 2009 La Mascaronne Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$10.** Crisp, edgy wine with spice as well as fruit, this is tight with a distinct fennel, herbal character and a firm texture. It is probably worth aging a few more months. Imported by Casa Bruno. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

**90 Château Maupague 2009 Rosé (Côtes de Provence Sainte-Victoire); \$20.** The subregion of Sainte-Victoire produces particularly fine rosés, and this smooth but structured wine is a good example. It has a firm, enveloping texture, bringing out fruit as well as caramel. The aftertaste springs the acidity. Imported by Frank Johnson Selections. —R.V.

**90 Domaines Ott 2009 Clos Mireille Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$37.** A dusty-textured wine, its fruit like grains scattered over the surface of a fresh crisp structure. The freshness is palpable and so is the depth of flavor. A food-friendly wine. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

**90 Les Maîtres Vignerons de la Presqu'île de Saint-Tropez 2009 Château de Pampelonne Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$NA.** From the showpiece chateau of the Saint-Tropez cooperative, this is a rich and



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full wine, showing the warm side of Provence rosé. Caramel and a smooth velvet texture dominate. Imported by Wine Agencies Inc. **Editors' Choice.** —R.V.

## 90 Mas de Cadenet 2009 Rosé (Côtes de Provence Sainte-Victoire); \$18.

Crisp red apples and tight fruit skins give this wine a taut, lively character. Just a touch of caramel to broaden the acidity. Imported by David Bowler Wine. —R.V.

## 89 Château d'Esclans 2008 Les Clans Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$60.

This smells ripe and full, and the palate confirms it. The wine is wood-aged and this broadens its character—the extra year means fruit is diminished, while the richness is increased. The finale brings some essential acidity. Imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers. —R.V.

## 89 Château de Léoubé 2009 Cuvée B Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$19.

A vanilla-dominated wine, ripe and broad, with a powerful sense of richness. This is certainly for food, missing the freshness but with a great swathe of sweet fruit. Imported by Jordan Imports. —R.V.

## 89 Château de Roquefort 2009 Corail de Roquefort Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$16.

A delicious wine, the total freshness along with the apple skin texture giving a great crisp bite. It has lively acidity that penetrates right through red cherry fruit flavors. Imported by Vos Selections. —R.V.

## 89 Château Riotor 2009 Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$14.

Under the same family ownership as Château Mont-Redon in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, this is soft, ripe and rich. Hints of caramel, a light sprinkling of toast flavors and spice. Full-bodied wine that works best with food. Imported by Kobrand. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

## 89 Domaine de Sulauze 2009 Pomponette Rosé (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence); \$16.

A lively, fresh wine, packed with raspberry acidity and red currant flavor. The wine is bright, crisp and deliciously lively. Imported by Polaner Selections. —R.V.

## 89 Domaines Ott 2009 Château de Selle Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$43.

The style at Domaines Ott has changed to become fresher and less oxidative, and the wine

fits the new look. It is vivid, crisp, a rich texture giving fresh berry fruit and a light layer of acidity. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

## 88 Château d'Esclans 2008 Esclans Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$35.

Soft wine, the acidity subservient to the rich red fruits and almost sweet vanilla. There is a firm touch of spice giving a fine twist to this ripe wine. Imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers. —R.V.

## 88 Château Revelette 2009 Rosé (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence); \$18.

Bone-dry style, very crisp and with a full fruit character of red apples and peaches along with red berries. A great food wine. Imported by Langdon Shiverick. —R.V.

## 88 Château Sainte Roseline 2009 Cuvée Lampe de Méduse Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$25.

It is less and less common to see the traditional bulbous Provençal bottle, but this simple and attractive wine fits well inside. It has touches of pink grapefruit to go with the wild strawberry in a great fruity burst. Imported by United Brands Imports. —R.V.

## 88 Château Sainte-Marguerite 2009 Cuvée M Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$27.

An attractively balanced wine bringing the freshness of pink grapefruit acidity alongside red cherries. The acidity is present, but not too dominant. A great summer food rosé. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —R.V.

## 88 Domaine d'Eole 2009 Rosé (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence); \$15.

Ripe, smooth and strawberry-flavored, a full-in-the-mouth wine with just a touch of caramel Imported by Cavatappi. —R.V.

## 88 Domaine Houchart 2009 Rosé (Côtes de Provence Sainte-Victoire); \$17.

Caramel aromas are followed by vanilla and toast flavors, giving a wine that is rich, with good complex fruits. The texture is soft, with the acidity appearing on the finish. Imported by David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

## 88 Domaine Sainte Lucie 2009 MiP\* Made in Provence Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$17.

A very pale rosé, this wine's delicate aromas of flowers, crushed stone, canteloupe and peach conjure images of summer.

The flavors follow in a similar vein, carried by plenty of weight and a long, slightly soft finish. Drink now. 1,000 cases imported. Imported by Savio Soares Selections.

## 88 Domaine Sorin 2009 Terra Amata Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$11.

Darker in color than many Provence rosés, this caramel-flavored wine has a fine line in ripe berry fruits to go with the smooth, velvet texture. Dry in style, its firm texture is right for food. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). **Best Buy.** —R.V.

## 88 Domaine Sorin 2009 Rosé (Bandedol); \$18.

Sweet juicy fruit flavors dominate this concentrated wine. It is rich, soft in texture, showing heat even though well-balanced. It could age for several months given its firm texture. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —R.V.

## 87 Château d'Esclans 2009 Whispering Angel Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$20.

The entry-level wine from Sacha Lichine's Château d'Esclans. It is soft, broad, with more caramel and spice than fruit. It is definitely a food, not an apéritif, wine. Imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers. —R.V.

## 87 Château l'Afrique 2009 Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$25.

Owned by the Sumeire family (like Château Maupague), this is fresh, brisk and crisp. And it shows a more serious side, with spice and cherry flavors coming through a tight apple skin texture. Imported by Cru Wines. —R.V.

## 87 Domaine Gavoty 2009 Cuvée Tradition Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$17.

From one of the top estates in Provence, this is a rich wine, packed with fruits. It has a layer of spice and caramel, and an edge of fennel and herbs. For food. Imported by Garber and Co. —R.V.

## 86 Château de Pourcieux 2009 Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$15.

Tart, fresh and a bit chunky and rustic, this blend of 60% Syrah, 20% Grenache and 20% Cinsaut features bold lime notes, scouring acidity and hints of crushed stone. Drink now. Imported by Baron Francois Ltd.

## 86 Château Sainte Roseline 2009 Perle de Roseline Rosé (Côtes de



**Provence); \$11.** This is a blend made from purchased grapes at Château Sainte-Roseline, giving a soft, vanilla-tinted wine, maybe just on the fat side. Imported by United Brands Imports. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

**86 Domaine de Souviou 2009 Rosé (Bandol); \$25.** The weight here is palpable, sweet peach and strawberry going with richness. There is enough acidity, but the pepper edge is less attractive. Imported by Bandol Wines Inc. —R.V.

**85 Domaine de la Sauveuse 2009 Cuvée Carolle Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$15.** Fresh strawberry and caramel aromas start the wine well, but the palate has a bitter edge of almonds, lifted by some juicy acidity and a light apple skin aftertaste. Imported by Vintage Trading Inc. —R.V.

**85 Domaine de Souviou 2009 Cuvée S Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$18.** Somewhat hard edged, this is as dry as possible, hinting at toast as well as lentils and quince. The acidity is balanced, but the wine shies away from the pleasure factor. Imported by Bandol Wines Inc. —R.V.

**85 Les Vignerons de Grimaud 2009 Cuvée du Golfe de Saint-Tropez Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$10.** Port Grimaud is a fishing village at the head of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez. This wine from the local cooperative is soft, on the bland side, but very attractive for the price. Imported by Volubilis Import Inc. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

**85 Mas de Cadenet 2009 Arbaude Rosé (Côtes de Provence); \$15.** Aromatic wine that shows fresh red berry fruits and a light texture. This is perfect apéritif material, its fruit bright and forward. Imported by House Of Burgundy. —R.V.

## PIEDMONT RED WINES

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### BARBERA D'ASTI

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**92 Braida di Giacomo Bologna 2007 Bricco dell'Uccellone (Barbera d'Asti); \$NA.** Bricco dell'Uccellone is an historic wine that shaped the modern history of

Barbera d'Asti and Piedmont in general. Aged 15 months in oak casks, the wine is bountiful and harmonious with aromas of cherry, blackberry and spice. There's a bright splash of crisp fruit on the close. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

**91 Il Cascinone 2007 Rive (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$27.** This Barbera shows elegance and harmony with ripe berry notes that are offset by wood spice and mineral notes. The extraction is thick and dense and the wine yields a plush, smooth texture in the mouth with bitter berry nuances on the close. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**91 Marchesi Alfieri 2007 Alfiera (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$60.** This is a fantastic Barbera d'Asti Superiore with a plush, soft, velvety feel and loads of intensity that peels back into layers of fresh blackberry, cherry, spice, chocolate, leather and exotic spice. This wine carries the banner high for all the Barbera producers now experimenting with a more modern style. Imported by Wineworth LLC. —M.L.

**91 Prunotto 2007 Costamiòle (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$50.** Here is a well crafted and plush Barbera with equal measures of fruit intensity and spicy oak tones of vanilla, smoke and tobacco. The wine is soft and velvety with a long chewy finish. Pair it with spicy lamb curry stewed in coconut milk. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**91 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2006 Monte Colombo (Barbera d'Asti); \$43.** Here's a very pleasurable Barbera with loads of fruit intensity followed by smoke, pipe tobacco, sweet chocolate and vanilla bean. The wine is executed in a modern style with enduring intensity and a soft, velvety finish. Pair it with baked chèvre cheese. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**91 Vietti 2007 La Crena (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$45.** Here's a dense and thickly extracted Barbera from the excellent 2007 vintage with a brooding, black appearance and aromas of smoke, black fruit, cassis and leather. The oak elements you taste at the very end still need to integrate within the overall flavors of this wine. Give it two more years. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**91 Vinchio-Vaglio Serra 2004 Sei Vigne Insynthesis (Barbera d'Asti**

**Superiore); \$70.** The fullness and intensity of the aromas here tell you that this is not your standard, easy-drinking Barbera. On the contrary, Sei Vigne Insynthesis is a well-crafted expression that shows quality of fruit and modern winemaking (with soft tones of vanilla and spice) woven throughout. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

**90 Agostino Pavia & Figli 2006 La Marescialla (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$32.** This is a plush and dense interpretation of Barbera with loads of fruit intensity followed by blackberry plum and sweet tobacco. The wine is dense, clean and offers round texture with a crisp acidity finale that is typical of this Italian grape variety. Imported by Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.

**90 Coppo 2007 Pomorosso (Barbera d'Asti); \$90.** Here's a wine that opens beautifully to all your senses. It boasts a dense, vibrant ruby color and delivers bright aromas of cherry, blackberry and bitter cranberry. In the mouth, however, this wine is softer and plusher than you'd expect. Sure, that trademark Barbera acidity is present, but its natural sharpness has been dulled. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**90 Costa Olmo 2006 (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$70.** Here's a lovely interpretation of Barbera Superiore from Asti with extremely well-integrated notes of spice, chocolate, black fruit and dusty mineral. The wine has all the aromas you look for in this type of wine and delivers a very clean and polished feel in the mouth with subtle hints of toasted oak at the very end. Imported by Il Pioppo. —M.L.

**90 Dezzani 2007 La Luna e Le Stelle (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$19.** Chocolate, coffee and espresso come to life thanks to the solid base of natural fruit that keeps the wine lively and fresh. Fruit and oak-related aromas work well together and give the wine brightness, softness and a velvety texture. Imported by Misa Imports. —M.L.

**90 Guasti Clemente 2006 Barcarato (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$35.** Well balanced and nicely integrated (the fruit elements jive smoothly with the oak components), this is a modern incarnation of traditional Barbera. You'll get spice, warmth and a velvety texture in the mouth. Imported by Margaux and Associates. —M.L.



**90 Michele Chiarlo 2007 La Court (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$40.** Here is a ripe and chewy Barbera d'Asti Superiore from the Nizza subzone with sticky fruit flavors and a thick, dense mouthfeel. The wine is plush, rich, naturally fresh and would pair well with roasted or grilled meats. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

**90 Tenuta La Meridiana 2007 Tra la Terra e il Cielo (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$39.** Smoky, toasted elements are followed by aromas of cherry and blackberry. This is a modern expression of Barbera with thick extraction and obvious oak intervention. The style is velvety and push and this wine would pair with cheese-filled ravioli. The finish is marked by very refreshing acidity. Imported by Nicola Biscardo Selections. —M.L.

**90 Tenuta Olim Bauda 2007 Le Rocchette (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$29.** Coffee, vanilla and tobacco create warm background tones for a mostly fruit-driven bouquet. The wine's aromatic layers seem well integrated and invite a pairing with succulent meat or braised lamb. Imported by US Wine Imports. —M.L.

**89 Agostino Pavia & Figli 2007 Molisse (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$19.** Here's a harmonious and well-balanced Barbera d'Asti Superiore with pretty mineral tones that are woven tight within a fabric of wild berry fruit and spice. The wine is tart and fresh on the finale with a long blast of blackberry and cherry on the close. Imported by Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.

**89 Bava 2003 Piano Alto (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$33.** Despite the infamous heat of the 2003 vintage, Piano Alto Barbera d'Asti Superiore is a surprising and impressive wine. There are pretty linear notes of black stone and granite backed by some ripe berry and blackberry. The wine seems younger than it really is. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

**89 Braida di Giacomo Bologna 2007 Montebruna (Barbera d'Asti); \$23.** There are slightly toasted notes here of chestnut or almond followed by bitter berry fruit and dark chocolate. The wine is crisp, polished and clean in the mouth with a tart, bitter almond close. Pair it with creamy potatoes dauphinoise. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

**89 Cantina Vignasone 2007 Selezione (Barbera d'Asti); \$17.** This is a distinctively linear and sharp Barbera d'Asti with a strong mineral vein that runs straight through the middle. You'll sense those mineral, granite notes on the bouquet and the mouthfeel is especially dry and polished. Imported by Rama Merchants. —M.L.

**89 Dacapo 2007 Vigna Dacapo (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$28.** You'll encounter smoky notes here that recall bacon fat or beef jerky. But you'll also recognize aromas of tobacco, black cherry and currant berry. The wine is soft and smooth in the mouth with a blast of cherry flavors, deep extraction, oak notes and bright acidity. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

**89 Damilano 2008 (Barbera d'Asti); \$19.** This is a very attractive oak-aged Barbera with aromas of sweet spice, bitter chocolate and loads of bright berry fruit. The wine is compact, clean and thanks to the bright acidity, it leaves your palate polished and fresh. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**89 Marchesi Alfieri 2007 La Tota (Barbera d'Asti); \$28.** Pretty coffee notes are offset by ripe aromas of raspberry, black cherry and chocolate. There is nice softness and density in this wine that is balanced against the natural acidity of the fruit. Pair this wine with cheesy pasta al forno. Imported by Wineworth LLC. —M.L.

**89 Michele Chiarlo 2006 La Court (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$50.** La Court is a plush, chewy and rich Barbera from one of the most successful wineries in Piedmont. You'll recognize sweet oak and vanilla aromas wrapped tight by black fruit, cherry and blueberry. In the mouth, the wine is appropriately dense and fresh. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

**89 Terre da Vino 2007 La Luna e i Falò (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$16.** Here's a lovely expression of Barbera from Asti, Piedmont, with a pretty balance of chocolate, cherry and blackberry aromas. Smoky oak-related elements appear in the background as do drying mineral notes. With some 29,000 cases made, this wine should not be difficult to locate and the low price is hard to beat. Imported by International Wine Traders. *Editors' Choice.* —M.L.

**89 Tre Donne 2005 Donna Bruna (Barbera d'Asti); \$19.** Donna Bruna Barbera d'Asti is a big, bold and modern expression with thick concentration and intense aromas of black cherry and spice. You'll notice tones of plum, prune and sweet cinnamon on the finish. Imported by Small Vineyards LLC. —M.L.

**88 Alfonso Boeri 2007 Porlapà (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$28.** The wine opens with a thick, black and dense appearance and segues to raw aromas of blackberry, cherry, tobacco, spice and natural rubber. There's a vinous, chewy quality here that needs more time in the bottle to unwind. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.L.

**88 Cantina Vignasone 2007 (Barbera d'Asti); \$17.** Pretty notes of dark chocolate and spice are well integrated within notes of blackberry and forest floor. This is a modern interpretation of a traditional wine that leaves enough space for the grape's rustic charm and sharp acidity to come through. Imported by Rama Merchants. —M.L.

**88 Cascina Roera 2004 Cardin (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$29.** This wine really opens a fascinating window on the aging potential of Barbera. From the 2004 vintage, it still exhibits elegant mineral notes with polished granite and slate. There's plenty of fruit there too, mostly cherry, and the wine ends with vanilla and spice. Imported by David Vincent Selection. —M.L.

**88 Coppo 2007 Campu du Rouss (Barbera d'Asti); \$19.** Slight hints of smoked meat and toasted nut open the aromatic parameters of this vibrant Barbera d'Asti. There's plenty of berry fruit at the base as well as natural crispness, but those warmer aromas help soften the acidic blow. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**88 Elio Perrone 2008 Tasmorcan (Barbera d'Asti); \$18.** Here's a pleasantly fresh and fruit-forward Barbera d'Asti with notes of wild berry and blackberry backed by a delicate touch of vanilla spice and bitter chocolate. Aromas of smoked bacon fill in the rear and give the wine a long-lasting and penetrating finish. Imported by Rare Wine Company. —M.L.

**88 Guasti Clemente 2006 Boschetto Vecchio (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$24.** Soft spice tones with chocolate and



tobacco are offset by intense and vibrant berry fruit. This is a fresh and tonic Barbera d'Asti Superiore that will pair with most cheese- or butter-based foods. The naturally high acidity can counter the fatty textures found in many foods. Imported by Margaux and Associates. —M.L.

**88 Malgrà 2006 Mora di Sassi (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$16.** Mora di Sassi offers nice fruit, cherry and berry tones followed by strong tones of smoke, spice and leather. The acidity is fresh and zippy and overall this wine needs two more years to integrate. Imported by Metrowine Distribution. —M.L.

**88 Tenuta dei Fiori 2007 Rusticardi 1933 (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$55.** Black, dense and thickly concentrated, this modern Barbera d'Asti Superiore shows loads of wood influence in front of the fruit. It still needs to find harmony and those sharp oak influences will surely fall into the background with two or three more years of bottle aging. Imported by Lionstore International. —M.L.

**88 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2007 (Barbera d'Asti); \$18.** Here's a textbook Barbera that boasts well-integrated mineral notes with plusher aromas of chocolate and ripe fruit. The wine is clean and compact but there's enough body and heft here to pair with braised pork or grilled lamb shanks. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**88 Villa Giada 2007 Bricco Dani (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$30.** Here's an inky-black Barbera with impossible extraction and rich tones of blackberry, smoke, mineral and currant berry. This is a modern expression of a native grape from Piedmont with an extremely chewy, raw and sweet sensation on the close. Imported by Vedi Wines. —M.L.

**87 Alfonso Boeri 2007 Martinette (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$14.** Here's an exceedingly friendly and approachable Barbera d'Asti Superiore with compact and clean aromas of mineral, tart fruit, hazelnuts and wild mushroom. The mouthfeel is fresh and there's a touch of sweetness here that offsets the sharpness of the natural acidity. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.L.

**87 Antica Casa Vinicola Scarpa 2006 Casascarpa (Barbera d'Asti); \$NA.** Light-bodied, crisp and clean, this is a simple

interpretation of Barbera that will surely pair with most meat and pasta dishes. The wine is polished, bright and fruity on the close. —M.L.

**87 Bricco dei Guazzi 2007 (Barbera d'Asti); \$22.** There are brambly notes here of forest floor and underbrush backed by enough fresh fruit to keep the wine chewy and fresh in the mouth. You'll also get notes of wet tobacco and wild mushroom that add complexity. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

**87 Ca'Romè 2007 La Gamberaja (Barbera d'Alba); \$35.** Vintner Romano Marengo has crafted a bright Barbera d'Alba with a simple approach that is generously rich in fruit. There's sharp, evident acidity here with polished tannins and a bright finish. Pair it with ravioli stuffed with fresh ricotta cheese. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**87 Cantine Volpi 2006 Vobis Tua (Barbera d'Asti); \$11.** This is a milky, dark and deeply concentrated Barbera with soapy, floral notes and loads of blueberry and blackberry at

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the back. The quality of the fruit is sweet and chewy and although there is bright acidity here, the closing note delivers a blast of black cherry. A great value too. Imported by Bedford International. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

**87 Cascina Galarin 2007 Le Querce (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** This Barbera opens with meaty aromas that resemble smoked bacon or beef jerky but you'll also get whiffs of blackberry, prune and plum. The wine is tart but also slightly sweet in the mouth and the overall fruit seems to show very mature, chewy characteristics. —M.L.

**87 Cascina Roera 2006 La Roera (Barbera d'Asti); \$18.** La Roera is a light and fresh expression of Barbera with bright fruit intensity and cooling crispness. The wine would work with wintery appetizers of cold cuts, salami, capers or olive paste on garlic toast. Imported by David Vincent Selection. —M.L.

**87 Cascina Roera 2004 Vigna San Martino (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$28.** Vigna San Martino offers warm aromas of wet earth and exotic spice backed by sweet cherry and blackberry preserves. The wine is smooth and velvety with a chewy, sweet finish. Imported by David Vincent Selection. —M.L.

**87 Castello del Poggio 2006 (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** This is a beautiful estate with an amphitheater of vines that represents one of the biggest single vineyards of Barbera in the Asti area. This particular expression ushers forth aromas of ripe fruit, smoked bacon and blackberry jam. It's clean, compact and fresh on the close. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

**87 Castello del Poggio 2005 Masaréj (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** Masaréj is Castello del Poggio's top expression of Barbera d'Asti, but this vintage shows warm characteristics of earth, smoked bacon, bresaola, prunes and plums. It doesn't seem to have what it takes for long aging, so drink up. Imported by Zonin USA. —M.L.

**87 Castello di Razzano 2006 Vigna Valentino Caligaris (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); SNA.** Heavy oak use is still evident (this wine is from the 2006 vintage so those toasted notes should be integrated by now) and takes away from the natural integrity of the fruit.

Spice, tobacco and chocolate appear and the wine ends with fresh crispness. —M.L.

**87 Caudrina 2008 La Solista (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** Brambly notes that recall forest berry and wild blueberry are backed by a very attractive mineral vein that holds this wine's aromas tightly together. This is a crisp, bright Barbera d'Asti with a touch of bitter almond on the close. —M.L.

**87 Costa Olmo 2007 La Madrina (Barbera d'Asti); \$55.** Here's a straight-laced Barbera d'Asti (aged in stainless steel) with linear aromas of berry fruit and cherry that appear in a direct and immediate manner. There's no great complexity here, nor is there supposed to be. This is a genuine expression of a fundamentally easy-drinking food wine. Imported by Il Pioppo. —M.L.

**87 Crivelli Marco Maria 2008 Collina La Mora (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** Here's a tight and traditional Barbera with a compact bouquet of forest berry, earth tones and a dash of exotic spice. It is tart and crisp on the palate with an enduring note of wild berry that characterizes the close. Imported by Michael R. Downey Selections. —M.L.

**87 Elio Perrone 2007 Mongovone (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$35.** Here's a thickly extracted and dense interpretation of Barbera lavished over with intense secondary aromas of oakly spice and toasted wood. There's a lot of wood here that is offputting at first but that will hopefully find harmony with more years in the bottle. Imported by Rare Wine Company. —M.L.

**87 F.lli Trincheri 2007 Rico (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); SNA.** Light coffee and tea-like aromas emerge from the nose of this sharp and crisp Barbera d'Asti Superiore. The wine is compact, firm and the mouthfeel is characterized by fresh berry notes and crisp fruit on the close. —M.L.

**87 F.lli Trincheri 2008 La Trincerina (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** Although this is a young Barbera—from the 2008 vintage—the wine already shows signs of aging. The color is ruby bordering on garnet and the nose is characterized by mature berry, wet earth, bramble and a touch of black truffle. —M.L.

**87 I Quaranta 2007 Asia (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** There's a raw, vinous quality to this wine that is made even more apparent thanks to the enormous thickness and extraction of its mouthfeel. You almost smell the winery here and get a good whiff of the freshness and overall maturity of the fruit. Its texture is extra chewy and plush. Imported by Terra Verus Trading Co. LP. —M.L.

**87 L'Armangia 2008 Sopra Berruti (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** Raw fruit aromas of blackberry and wild fruit are followed by subtle tones of natural rubber and spice. The wine is soft and plush in the mouth with fresh acidity and good density to maintain a long, bright aftertaste. Imported by DGL Distributors. —M.L.

**87 La Ballerina 2007 GB (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** Here's a full and generous Barbera with ripe aromas of blackberry fruit, plum and jammy raspberry. This is a plump, soft style of wine from Piedmont with thick extraction and a chewy, dense feel. —M.L.

**87 La Gironda di Galandrino 2007 La Gena (Barbera d'Asti); SNA.** This Barbera d'Asti boasts a distinctive aromatic profile with elements of dried herbs and thyme surrounded by fresh berry fruit and warmer hues of smoked meat and wet earth. This is a down-to-earth but genuine expression with a bright finale and long fruit flavors. Imported by Eurobiz Inc. —M.L.

**87 Michele Chiarlo 2007 Le Orme (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$15.** If you are new to Barbera, Le Orme makes for a perfect introduction to this popular native grape of Northern Italy. This expression focuses on bright fruit tones with cherry and blueberry nuances. Try it with a pizza Margherita topped with fresh mozzarella and basil. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

**87 Michele Chiarlo 2008 Cipressi della Court (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); SNA.** Here's a very fresh and vinous smelling Barbera d'Asti with raw notes of chewy cherry fruit and bright forest berry. It's a simple, easygoing wine with a high dose of natural acidity to keep your palate refreshed. —M.L.

**87 Montalbera 2008 La Ribelle (Barbera d'Asti); \$20.** There are brambly,



wild berry or crabapple notes here that are reinforced by the wine's naturally high acidity. This Barbera shows a pretty ruby color with dense thickness and a smooth, berry-filled finish. Imported by Bonhomie Wine Imports. —M.L.

**87 Pescaja 2007 Solneri (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); \$35.** Here is a distinctive interpretation of Barbera with candy-like aromas of cherry and raspberry followed by sweet spice and fruit cola. The nose is extremely floral and fragrant and might not appeal to everyone, although the mouthfeel—acidic and dense—is very much in line with Barbera. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

**87 Pico Maccario 2008 Lavignone (Barbera d'Asti); \$13.** Here's a fresh and zippy Barbera d'Asti aged only in stainless steel with pristine notes of fresh berry fruit and cooling acidity to match. It's an easy red wine with a simple but genuine flavor profile that would pair with home-cooked pasta. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —M.L.

**87 Pico Maccario 2008 Berrò (Barbera d'Asti); \$9.** Tremendous value is offered by this nicely concentrated and intense expression of Barbera. Pure aromas of berries and white cherries emerge from the nose and the wine offers a blast of piquant freshness that would pair with spaghetti carbonara. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). **Best Buy.** —M.L.

**87 Poderi dei Bricchi Astigiani 2006 Bricco Preje (Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza); SNA.** This bright Barbera combines fresh and crisp fruit notes with spicy tones of old leather and dried tobacco leaf. The wine is sharp and thin in the mouth with loads of bright berry fruit on the close. —M.L.

**87 Prunotto 2008 Fiulot (Barbera d'Asti); \$15.** Here's a nicely clean and compact Barbera d'Asti with pretty, albeit simple, aromas of wild fruit, pomegranate juice and fresh blueberries. You'll enjoy the aromatic purity of this wine—which shows little sign of interfer-

ence in the winery—and the overall crispness of the fruit. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**87 Tenuta Olim Bauda 2008 La Villa (Barbera d'Asti); \$16.** This is an informal and easygoing Barbera d'Asti that presents an interesting medley of fruit and berry aromas. The style is fresh and clean (you'll taste that characteristic acidity of this grape variety) and would pair well with butter- or cheese-based foods. Imported by US Wine Imports. —M.L.

**87 Vinchio-Vaglio Serra 2007 I Tre Vescovi (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$18.** This is a genuine but simple interpretation of Barbera d'Asti Superiore with fresh fruit layers and vibrant tones of cherry, cranberry and pomegranate. This easy-pairing food wine boasts cleansing acidity, medium density and a polished finish. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

**86 Araldica 2007 Albera (Barbera d'Asti); \$12.** Albera is a very well-valued Barbera d'Asti with chalky aromas of tale

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powder and schoolroom blackboard backed by cherries, blueberries and black fruit. Those polished mineral notes makes this is very interesting and unique expression of this native Italian grape. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**86 Cantine Aurora 2006 Aurora (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$10.** This Barbera d'Asti Superiore offers good value with a thinner, more traditional style that puts emphasis on the liveliness of the fruit found in its bouquet and on the finish. Bright acidity is followed by a touch of smoke or toast at the very end. Imported by Verdoni Imports. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

**86 Coppo 2008 L'Avvocata (Barbera d'Asti); \$16.** L'Avvocata delivers a linear and correct approach with balanced fruit tones opposite fresh acidity. You'll recognize aromas of wild berry, blueberry and cherry and the close is capped by a slight pinch of fizziness. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**86 Michele Chiarlo 2008 Le Orme (Barbera d'Asti Superiore); \$15.** Le Orme is a celebrated Barbera that is especially popular among enthusiasts of this indigenous grape in the United States. It offers a traditional approach with raw cherry and cola notes that would pair perfectly with pizza and pasta. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

**86 Pico Maccario 2007 Lavignone (Barbera d'Asti); \$13.** The 2007 vintage was a hot one and La Vignone delivers all the jammy, mature fruit tones you'd expect in an immediate and upfront manner. Aromas of strawberry and blackberry preserves are backed by sour, almost sharp acidity. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —M.L.

**86 Ricossa 2007 Antica Casa (Barbera d'Asti); \$13.** This is a ripe and jammy expression of Barbera d'Asti that offers sweet aromas of blackberry, strawberry and blueberry preserves. All that mature fruit is nicely balanced by bright acidity in the mouth. Imported by Touchstone Wines. —M.L.

**86 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2006 (Barbera d'Asti); \$18.** From one of the most simpatico producers in Piedmont, Marchesi di Gresy's bright Barbera d'Asti opens with a dark, browning color and inky aromas of mineral and black fruit. The finish is

surprising bright and lively. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**86 Villa Giada 2008 Ajan (Barbera d'Asti); \$13.** Here's a well concentrated Barbera d'Asti with a deep shade of ruby and garnet and vibrant aromas of cola, teabag and fresh forest fruit. The mouthfeel is both drying and crisp at the same time. Imported by Vedi Wines. —M.L.

**85 Bava 2007 Cocconato Libera (Barbera d'Asti); \$15.** Cocconato Libera makes a slightly awkward first impression with sulphur notes that blow off fast enough to reveal cherry cola, raspberries and earthy white mushrooms. Drink now, just decant first. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

**85 Pescaja 2008 Soliter (Barbera d'Asti); \$25.** Very ripe, almost jammy, notes of mature raspberry and strawberry appear at first, giving this wine a sunny, full and generous disposition. Barbera's naturally high acidity kicks in to clean the palate and give the wine a fresh and tonic sensation overall. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

**85 Quattro Leoni 2008 (Barbera d'Asti); \$17.** Here's a bright and fresh Barbera d'Asti that would make a perfect companion to pizza or simple pasta dishes. The aromas are pleasing and inviting with tones of raspberry and crushed white pepper. Cooling acidity leaves a fresh sensation overall. Imported by Marquee Artisan Wines. —M.L.

## BARBERA D'ALBA

**91 Parusso 2007 Vecchie Vigne in Località Ornati (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$45.** Here is a bright and modern Barbera d'Alba with succulent fruit tones followed by chocolate and exotic spice. The wine is soft and plush (it hardly seems like a Barbera if you consider more traditional expressions of this native grape) and would pair with a long list of rich, hearty foods. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. —M.L.

**91 Rivetto 2007 Lirano Soprano (Barbera d'Alba); \$50.** Rich and modern, with dense extraction and raw notes of cherry, blackberry and spice, this wine is very representative of the new face of Barbera d'Alba. There are

sweet fruit notes followed by equally sweet oak tones of cinnamon, chocolate and spice. Imported by Vintage Imports, Inc. —M.L.

**91 Vietti 2007 Scarrone (Barbera d'Alba); \$45.** Here's a plush, modern Barbera d'Alba with bright fruit and berry tones followed by softer notes of cinnamon and chocolate. On the whole it is a well-integrated wine, although there is power and density here that suggests a pairing with lasagna or thickly cheesy pasta. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**90 Andrea Oberto 2006 Giada (Barbera d'Alba); \$45.** This is a bright and fruit-forward red wine from Piedmont in Northern Italy that exhibits prominent, but not overly intense or intrusive, aromas of fresh fruit, exotic spice and drying mineral. The wine has a fresh acidic component balanced by a jammy, sweet finish. Imported by Chambers & Chambers. —M.L.

**90 Le Vigne di Ca' Nova 2007 Bric dei Maschi (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$19.** Here's a very successful expression of Barbera from the Alba zone of Piedmont with bright fruit tones followed by smooth spice, chocolate and tobacco. The wine is rich, supple and powerful on the close with a blast of crisp acidity at the end. Imported by The Shepherd Company. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

**90 Marchesi di Barolo 2006 Ravera (Barbera d'Alba); \$34.** This celebrated Barbera d'Alba from the historic Marchesi di Barolo winery opens with a dark, brooding color and earthy aromas of wild mushroom, cured beef and dark forest fruit. It shows impressive color and concentration and those inviting earth, mineral notes would pair with elegant dishes such as game hen, roast duck or porcini risotto. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

**90 Marziano Abbona 2008 Rinaldi (Barbera d'Alba); \$20.** Smooth and sophisticated with rich blackberry and plum aromas backed by oak-driven tones of spice and leather, this is a very rich expression of Barbera (that sees eight months in oak barrels). The overall effect is excellent and the mouthfeel culminates with bright tones of prune and crushed black pepper. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.



**90 Orlando Abrigo 2007 Mervisano (Barbera d'Alba); \$28.** The Mervisano Barbera d'Alba (that ages 15 months in oak) offers a deliciously ripe and rich array of spice, black fruit and blackberry. The wine shows dark, inky concentration with creamy fruit tones and warm smoothness on the finish. The acidity is present, but very well integrated. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

**90 Ponchione Maurizio 2007 Monfrini (Barbera d'Alba); \$30.** With 16 months of careful oak barrique aging, this opulent wine represents a new generation of Barbera d'Alba. It opens with a gorgeous appearance and thick aromas of black cherry, boysenberry, plum and sweet spice. It has dense, sweet tannins and offers a biting touch of astringency on the close that would pair with succulent cuts of meat. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

**90 Rivetto 2006 Lirano Soprano (Barbera d'Alba); \$35.** The Lirano Soprano Barbera d'Alba is ripe with aromas of coffee and freshly ground espresso bean, followed by chocolate and a playful touch of white pepper. The fruit tones hold up nicely to round off the bouquet and the wine balances richness and freshness. Imported by VolioVino. —M.L.

**90 Rivetto 2007 Zio Nando (Barbera d'Alba); \$30.** This is a rich and chocolaty expression of Barbera d'Alba with thick concentration and immediate aromas of black currant and cherry. The wine is dense and extracted with smooth, drying tannins and a piquant blast of acidity on the close. Imported by Vintage Imports, Inc. —M.L.

**90 Scarzello 2006 (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$25.** There's slight sweetness here in the form of soft oak elements that glide easily together with the natural fruitiness and freshness of Barbera. There's nice personality and dimension and the wine is smooth and soft on the finish (save for that prickly touch of acidity you should expect). Imported by Vignaioli. —M.L.

**89 Agostino Bosco 2007 (Barbera d'Alba); \$30.** Sweet oak tones come to the forefront of this bright Barbera d'Alba and add tones of vanilla, chocolate and cinnamon spice. There is enough fruit here, however, to balance out the wood tones and the wine is smooth and rich in the mouth. Imported by Tanaro River Imports LLC. —M.L.

**89 Albino Rocca 2007 Gepin (Barbera d'Alba); \$28.** Velvety, rich and concentrated, this modern interpretation of Barbera from Alba offers silky tones of cherry, black cassis fruit and spice followed by bright acidity and a smooth texture. Pair this fruit-forward wine with roasted pork and fennel sauce. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. —M.L.

**89 Cascina Roccalini 2007 (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$35.** This Barbera d'Alba Superiore shows elegance and sophistication with linear mineral notes of graphite and lead pencil as well as black fruit and cherry. This wine exhibits big freshness, loads of fruit and you don't feel the 15% alcohol at all. Imported by Domenico Selections. —M.L.

**89 Cascina Roccalini 2008 (Barbera d'Alba); \$23.** Crafted by vintner Paolo Veglio, this bright Barbera d'Alba shows evident oak tones of spice and tobacco surrounded by black fruit, plums and prunes. Those black fruit aromas do a very good job of balancing out the more austere oak influences. Imported by Domenico Selections. —M.L.

**89 Conterno Fantino 2008 Vignota (Barbera d'Alba); \$33.** The Vignota Barbera d'Alba exhibits generous and simple fruit aromas of blackberry and boysenberry with loads of fresh cherry concentration. Those lively fruit tones are backed by tones of spice, cola and chocolate. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**89 Costa di Bussia 2008 Campo del Gatto (Barbera d'Alba); \$25.** Here is a smooth and modern interpretation of Barbera d'Alba with plush and bright notes of cherry, blackberry, exotic spice, natural rubber and a touch of moist earth or forest floor. The wine is rich and smooth in the mouth and ends with a blast of cooling cherry fruit. Imported by Siena Imports. —M.L.

**89 E. Pira e Figli (Chiara Boschis) 2008 (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$31.** One year of careful oak aging has helped to shape a very attractive bouquet loaded with Christmas spice, cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla and bright cherry. The wood element is still evident but will most likely integrate with a bit more time in the bottle. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

**89 Elvio Cagno 2007 Bricco dei Merli (Barbera d'Alba); \$32.** Here's a rich



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and thickly extracted Barbera d'Alba with purplish hues to its ruby color and bright aromas of cherry, black currants and cassia. Like many of the wines from the Alba area, we notice quite a lot of toast here that comes forth as cinnamon, vanilla and exotic spice. —M.L.

**89 Giacomo Vico 2007 (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$24.** This elegant Superiore expression of Barbera d'Alba offers loads of spice and black fruit aromas and slightly jammy notes of strawberry and blackberry pie. You'll also get pretty tones of chocolate and tobacco, capped by a smooth, velvety finish. Imported by Total Wine & More. —M.L.

**89 Palladino 2006 Bricco delle Olive (Barbera d'Alba); \$30.** Bricco delle Olive is an elegant and austere Barbera d'Alba with a dark color and rich concentration backed by bright acidity and polished tannins. This lively wine (from the 2006 vintage) still shows very good integrity of fruit. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

**89 Terre da Vino 2008 Croere (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$21.** Here's a bold interpretation of Barbera with a lush, modern style that sees both wood influences and loads of ripe, jammy fruit. This is a hearty meat wine or a wine to pair with cheesy lasagna: there's bright acidity here and enough pulp and forward fruit to stand up to winter foods or stews. Imported by International Wine Traders. —M.L.

**88 Cascina del Monastero 2007 Vigna Parroco (Barbera d'Alba); \$28.** Sweet oak-driven notes of cinnamon, vanilla and dark chocolate appear at first, leaving only a sliver of room for the natural berry and cherry fruit to come forward. The mouthfeel is silky and smooth with a touch of bright acidity on the close. Imported by Metropolis Wine Merchants, Inc. —M.L.

**88 Cascina del Monastero 2006 Vigna Parroco (Barbera d'Alba); \$18.** Cascina del Monastero's bright Vigna Parroco Barbera opens with sweet aromas of spice, cinnamon, clove and forest fruit. The texture is smooth and rich here and bright berry crispness appears on the close. Imported by Metropolis Wine Merchants, Inc. —M.L.

**88 Francone 2007 I Patriarchi (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$14.** Warm tones

of cured meat, wet earth and wild mushroom are balanced out by brighter notes of wild berry, cherry and cassia. This is a modern Barbera d'Alba with a rich palate, crisp acidity and long persistency (at an attractive price). Imported by De Benedetto Imports. *Editors' Choice.* —M.L.

**88 Marcarini 2008 Ciabot Camerano (Barbera d'Alba); \$18.** Barbera Ciabot Camerano shows thick concentration and bright aromas of black fruit, plum and forest berry. There's good intensity here and background notes of cinnamon and milk chocolate. It's a thick, well-textured wine that would serve well when paired with veal ragù. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**88 Mauro Sebaste 2008 Santa Rosalia (Barbera d'Alba); \$21.** Mauro Sebaste is an up-and-coming winery to watch with a full range of Piedmont wines. This pretty Barbera from Alba shows big oak tones that need more time to integrate within the folds of the dark berry and sweet spice tones that are typical of this deeply beloved native grape. Imported by Tutto Vino. —M.L.

**88 Pecchenino 2007 Quass (Barbera d'Alba); \$28.** The longer this wine sits in the glass, the more beautiful its aromas become. It opens with a dark and rich appearance and vibrant notes of blueberry, wild berry and exotic spice. There's a slightly lactic note at first that slowly evolves into milk chocolate and fudge. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**88 Poderi Colla 2008 Costa Bruna (Barbera d'Alba); \$28.** This hearty Barbera from the Costa Bruna cru exhibits thick, almost meaty aromas of cured bresaola, leather, tobacco and black fruit. It's a crisp, clean and inherently food friendly wine that would pair with ham, beef or game dishes. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**88 Ponchione Maurizio 2006 Vigneto Pasau (Barbera d'Alba); \$25.** Prominent oak tones of spice, leather and chocolate sit heavy over a broad base of dark, jammy fruit. This wine is executed in a big, bold style and would pair well with stews or game dishes. The acidic finish will cut though hearty meat recipes. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

**88 Terre da Vino 2006 Croere (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$21.** Here's

a ripe and slightly jammy expression of Barbera d'Alba with thick fruit layers followed by intense spice, chocolate and toasted almond. The wine is succulent and dense in the mouth and would stand up to braised beef or country stew. Imported by International Wine Traders. —M.L.

**88 Virna Borgogno 2008 (Barbera d'Alba); \$18.** Aged for 12 months in large oak casks, this bright Barbera offers a friendly blend of fresh berry fruit and subdued spice. The wine is not overdone or over extracted and you'll appreciate the touches of cherry, blackberry and natural rubber. It wins more points in the mouth thanks to its power and determination. Imported by Ionia Atlantic. —M.L.

**87 Boroli 2007 Quattro Fratelli (Barbera d'Alba); \$14.** This bright wine opens with sweet tones of cherry, chocolate and a touch of cinnamon spice. That characteristic Barbera acidity kicks in at the end and the wine offers smooth richness and plenty of fruit in the mouth. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**87 Cascina Chicco 2008 Granera Alta (Barbera d'Alba); \$20.** Here is a plush and elegant Barbera d'Alba with bright fruit tones followed by graphite, a dash of exotic spice and pretty earthy nuances. The wine is bright and fruity in the mouth with cherry and blackberry on the close. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

**87 Cascina Chicco 2007 Bric Loira (Barbera d'Alba); \$40.** Here's a Barbera d'Alba that is almost too much of a good thing. The wine is black and dense with inky concentration and thick aromas of smoked bacon, beef jerky and black fruit. You'll also recognize tones of moist earth and wild mushroom. The fruit seems on the ripe and jammy side and the wine is smooth and thick in the mouth. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

**87 Giacomo Vico 2008 (Barbera d'Alba); \$18.** This wine is packed tight with plum and blackberry aromas and even a drying touch of Graham cracker. The wine is not too concentrated or rich, which makes it more appropriate with easy, home-cooked meals. On the close, it offers a ton of sweet, bright cherry fruit. Imported by Total Wine & More. —M.L.

**87 Oscar Bosio 2007 La Bruciata (Barbera d'Alba); \$12.** Here's a genuine



and straightforward Barbera d'Alba with good quality of fruit (this wine is neither too dense or extracted) and ripe tones of cherry and raspberry. The mouthfeel is compact and firm. This is your quintessential pizza or pasta wine. Imported by Baroness Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

**87 Tenuta Carretta 2007 Bric Quercia (Barbera d'Alba); \$22.** Liquid smoke and toasted elements of roasted hazelnut and cured meat dominate the nose of this modern Barbera d'Alba. There is power and high alcohol here too, coupled by the wine's naturally high acidity that is a bit strong on the palate. Pair this wine with very cheesy foods. Imported by Suprex International. —M.L.

**87 Tre Donne 2006 Tradizione (Barbera d'Alba); \$17.** Tradizione, as the name suggests, does evoke the storied traditions of Piemontese winemaking. Aged in Slavonian oak casks (instead of French barrique) the wine exhibits bright berry aromas with raw tones of raspberries and white cherries. Imported by Small Vineyards LLC. —M.L.

**86 Giacomo Fenocchio 2008 (Barbera d'Alba Superiore); \$22.** Warm and inviting, Giacomo Fenocchio's Barbera d'Alba Superiore offers earthy tones of cured meat, white mushroom and dark fruit. You don't expect the sudden sweetness that appears in the mouth, nor do you foresee the chewiness of its texture. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

**86 Giacosa Fratelli 2007 Bussia (Barbera d'Alba); \$16.** You'll appreciate the easygoing and straight-shooting nature of this fresh and informal Barbera d'Alba from the Bussia cru. The nose includes bright aromas of spice and raw, somewhat sharp tones of forest berry and raspberry. Pair this wine with meat involtini (meat rolled with breadcrumbs and pignoli nuts). Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

**86 Marchesi di Barolo 2007 Ruvei (Barbera d'Alba); \$17.** The Ruvei expression of Barbera d'Alba (from one of Piedmont's biggest and most historic producers) offers a simple, crisp and genuine red wine experience. A small percentage of Nebbiolo is added to a lush base of Barbera, resulting in a lighter, brighter wine. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

**86 Palladino 2008 Ca' del Sarto (Barbera d'Alba); \$11.** Here's an easy-

going and traditional expression of Barbera that is not overstated or exaggerated in any way. In fact, fruit intensity is measured and the wine presents an informal, no-fuss but elegant front. You'll get aromas of cherry, blackberry and spice. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

**86 Pertinace 2006 (Barbera d'Alba); \$15.** This Barbera d'Alba from the 2006 vintage exhibits a slightly brownish, aged color with aromas of candied fruit, dried plums and prunes. There are gritty, thick tannins with flavors of smoked ham or beef jerky on the close. Imported by MW Imports. —M.L.

**86 Ponchione Maurizio 2007 Donia (Barbera d'Alba); \$18.** Upfront and generous, this is a bright and food-friendly Barbera d'Alba. What it lacks in overall complexity and aromatic intensity, it makes up for in terms of freshness and fruity simplicity. You'll love the dense concentration and fresh cherry flavors. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

**86 Rivetti Massimo 2005 Serraboella (Barbera d'Alba); \$29.** Serraboella Barbera d'Alba is loaded with aged aromas of dried fruit, prunes, apricots, tobacco and Indian spice. The wine shows black, inky concentration and fine, polished tannins. Imported by Wine Emporium. —M.L.

**86 Tenuta L'Illuminata 2005 Colbertina (Barbera d'Alba); \$25.** Despite its age (the wine is from the 2005 vintage) this Barbera d'Alba is impressively vinous and fresh with bright berry notes backed by some prune and plum nuances. It's tart and chewy in the mouth. Imported by Majestic Imports. —M.L.

**85 Silvano Bolmida 2007 Conca del Grillo (Barbera d'Alba); \$19.** The oak element is strong here—very strong—and one wonders if it will ever fully integrate even with more years of aging in the bottle. There's not much fruit left and what you do get is ripe and jammy. You can feel the alcohol at the back. Otherwise, the wine is dense and smooth on the palate. Imported by Morgan Import LLC. —M.L.



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## BARBERA DEL MONFERRATO

### 92 Cantina Iuli 2006 Barabba (Barbera del Monferrato Superiore); \$59.

Here's a standout Barbera from Monferrato with loads of intensity, complexity and persistency. You'll get aromas of blackberry and cherry followed by exotic spice, vanilla and pipe tobacco. The mouthfeel is smooth, soft and thick. Excellent. Imported by Indie Wineries Division. —M.L.

### 89 Cantina Iuli 2007 Umberta (Barbera del Monferrato); \$28.

Here's a dark, fruit-forward Barbera del Monferrato with plump aromas of cherry, blueberry, forest fruit and plum. The aromas focus on simple fruit, making this an easy, food-friendly wine that you'll want to serve at home with friends and family. This is a dynamic winery to watch. Imported by Indie Wineries Division. —M.L.

### 89 Giulio Accornero e Figli 2007 Bricco Battista (Barbera del Monferrato Superiore); \$30.

A tiny hint of vanilla and toasted almond surrounds a plump core of bright fruit, black cherry and blueberry. This is a simple, easygoing wine that has an added layer of thickness and concentration that makes it appropriate to serve with meat-filled pasta or lasagna. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. —M.L.

### 88 Agricola Sulin 2004 Ornella (Barbera del Monferrato Superiore); \$20.

From the celebrated 2004 vintage, this expression of Barbera offers solid and correct aromas of ripe fruit, raspberries, wet earth and leather. The wine is bright and incredibly generous in terms of intensity and purity of the fruit flavors. Imported by Michael R. Downey Selections. —M.L.

### 88 Gaudio 2008 Zerolegno (Barbera del Monferrato); \$15.

Bright, succulent berry tones are followed by a touch of smoked meat and wet earth that is typically found in the Barbera grape. This expression also has a hint of tobacco and exotic spice at the back that gives it more dimension and personality. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

### 87 Agricola Sulin 2008 Barbera del Monferrato; \$16.

This hearty Barbera del Monferrato offers surprisingly thick concen-

tration and loads of bright fruit intensity. It's an inky, dark wine with bright nuances of cherry and blackberry and although there's a vinous, raw aspect to the bouquet, the mouthfeel is attractively thick and chewy. Imported by Michael R. Downey Selections. —M.L.

### 87 Braida di Giacomo Bologna 2008 La Monella (Barbera del Monferrato); \$NA.

Here's a fresh, simple Barbera with a tiny touch of toasted almond that gives it slightly more complexity and intensity. The mouthfeel is lean and light with a short but satisfying finish. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

### 87 Bricco dei Guazzi 2007 Barbera del Monferrato; \$24.

Here's a simpatico Barbera from Monferrato with bright berry and cherry notes followed by a slightly thicker, more substantial texture. You'll get drying tannins and bright acidity that keeps the palate polished and clean. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

### 87 Montalbera 2008 La Briosia (Barbera del Monferrato); \$20.

Bright fruit aromas such as wild berry, red apple, white almond and blueberry come to the foreground. This is a still wine but there's a touch of tonic foaminess in the mouth that is followed by a long array of simple fruit nuances. Imported by Bonhomie Wine Imports. —M.L.

### 86 Marchesi di Barolo 2007 Maràia (Barbera del Monferrato); \$11.

A small percentage of Dolcetto has been added to this Barbera del Monferrato to smooth out the natural acidity and add a touch of extra structure to the finish. You can't beat the low price here or the simple generosity of its cherry and vanilla aromas. Imported by Wine Wave. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

### 85 La Casaccia 2008 Barbera del Monferrato; \$17.

Here's a modern, thickly extracted Barbera d'Asti with a very distinctive nose that includes mature fruit elements, white mushroom, wet earth, bramble, spice and fresh grapes. There is a chewy rawness or vinous quality to this wine. Imported by Oliver McCrum Wines. —M.L.

## DOLCETTO D'ALBA

### 88 Aurelio Settimo 2008 (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$25.

Aurelio Settimo's lively Dolcetto offers a surprise twist in the form of

black fruit, Indian spice and natural rubber. The overall effect is rich in cherry and sweet fruit and the wine tastes plush and creamy on the close. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

### 88 Ceretto 2009 Rossana (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$25.

The historic Ceretto estate excels in the production of crisp whites and important red wines. That same attention to detail is paid to this informal expression of Dolcetto. Aromas here recall cherry cola and blueberry and the wine boasts a bright, saturated color and a palate-cleansing finish. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

### 88 Gianni Voerzio 2009 Rochettevino (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$25.

This is an impressive Dolcetto with a deeply aromatic character. The generous notes of pressed flowers, roses and perfumed violets distinguish this expression from the rest. Those huge floral and fruit tones transfer to the mouth as well, where they last long on the finish. Imported by BelVino LLC. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

### 88 Prunotto 2008 Mosesco (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$45.

Here is a raw, chewy and vinous expression of Dolcetto with loads of bright berry and fruit intensity. The wine is easy and fresh with dense pulp and texture on the close. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

### 88 Tre Donne 2007 Donna Rossa (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$16.

Made by the three Lequio sisters, Donna Rossa Dolcetto delivers a traditional and linear style with good intensity and a fair level of complexity. There are loads of spice and fresh fruit aromas here and the wine is capped by some sour cherry flavors. Imported by Small Vineyards LLC. —M.L.

### 87 Bava 2009 Controvento (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$15.

This youthful expression of Dolcetto offers a dark, concentrated style and a very noticeable mineral tone that slices through the lush blueberry and raspberry aromas. The wine is tonic and vibrant and although there isn't huge complexity here, there is a good, fresh quality of fruit. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

### 87 Cascina del Monastero 2007 (Dolcetto d'Alba Superiore); \$12.

Lively and vibrant with loads of wild berries and black fruit, this is an oak-aged Dolcetto that lives up to the best qualities this native Italian grape can offer. The wine would pair with a long list of



Mediterranean and South American foods thanks to its firm tannins and bright finish. Imported by Metropolis Wine Merchants, Inc. **Best Buy.** —M.L.

**87 Cascina Roccalini 2008 (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$16.** Here's a decidedly uncomplicated expression of Dolcetto from vintner Paolo Veglio that plays its fruit and spice cards very well. You'll get tones of blueberry, plum and wild berry, with a touch of cinnamon and clove at the end. The tannic structure is firm enough to contend with creamy cheese. Imported by Domenico Selections. —M.L.

**87 Ceretto 2008 Rossana (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$25.** Rossana makes an ideal match to pizza or pasta with fresh tomato, a clove of garlic and chopped basil. The berry tones are bright and compact and there are light but polished tannins on the close. This lively wine is widely available in the United States. Imported by Wilson Daniels Ltd. —M.L.

**87 E. Pira e Figli (Chiara Boschis) 2009 (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$19.** This bright Dolcetto d'Alba offers fresh fruit and berry flavors on top of rich concentration and a plush, velvety feel. This is a very easy, uncomplicated wine that will pair with most home-cooked pasta dishes. Imported by Indigenous Selections. —M.L.

**87 Giacosa Fratelli 2008 San Rocco (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$16.** Dolcetto San Rocco is a clean and elegant wine with a less obvious aromatic offering of forest berry, blueberry and spice. The wine is bright and tonic in the mouth with a touch of firmness on the close that helps keep the mouth refreshed. Imported by Bedford International. —M.L.

**87 Gianni Gagliardo 2009 (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$22.** Gianni Gagliardo is a winery to watch and its fresh Dolcetto is a distinctive wine with a touch of green or wild herb mixed within a greater context of forest berry and cherry. This is a unique expression with good freshness and structure on the close. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

**87 Marchesi di Barolo 2008 Madonna di Como (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$17.** This expression of Dolcetto is packed tight with loads of bright berry and black fruit aromas, but also has a polished mineral vein at the core. This is a lively, cheerful wine with good intensity, sour

cherry flavors and firm tannins. Drink now. Imported by Wine Wave. —M.L.

**87 Mauro Sebaste 2009 Santa Rosalia (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$18.** Santa Rosalia is the quintessential pizza wine with bright fruit integrity and a touch of piquant spice on the close. The wine is fresh, firm and keeps the palate clean. Imported by Tutto Vino. —M.L.

**87 Pe're Alessandro 2009 (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$17.** Easy, bright and sweet smelling, this vibrant Dolcetto offers an informal drinking match to home-cooked pasta and light meat dishes. The wine is soft and plush with firm structure. Imported by Vintwood International Ltd. —M.L.

**87 Prunotto 2009 (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$17.** If you're not familiar with the tastes and character of the Dolcetto grape, this widely available expression by Prunotto is typical in its bright array of wild berry and black fruit aromas. The wine is young, fresh and generous in its youthful flavors. Imported by Winebow. —M.L.

**87 Renato Ratti 2009 Colombè (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$15.** This bright Dolcetto from Renato Ratti opens with a dark, inky color and well concentrated fruit aromas of blueberry and cherry. Those big fruit tones are enhanced by the wine's full color and polished finish. Very nice and well priced too. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

**87 Rivetto 2009 Ercolino (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$15.** Ercolino offers an informal interpretation of Dolcetto with a nicely concentrated and dense appearance and loads of vibrant fruit aromas (raspberry and blackberry foremost). There are polished mineral tones here as well that emerge on the wine's dusty, drying finish. Imported by Vintage Imports, Inc. —M.L.

**87 Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy 2008 Monte Aribaldo (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$20.** There's a certain elegance to this Dolcetto that distinguishes it in a crowd. The fruit element is bright and strong and the wine shows generous layers of raspberry and cherry on the close. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct. —M.L.

**86 Cantine San Silvestro 2009 Priamaio (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$14.** This Dolcetto offers a correct nose with fresh layers of



  
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cherry, blueberry and wild berries. There isn't huge intensity here but the wine does offer a full, soft mouthfeel with some mild tannins on the close. Imported by BelVino LLC. —M.L.

**86 Conterno Fantino 2009 Bricco Bastia (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$23.** Bricco Bastia offers an inky, dense expression of Dolcetto with loads of dark fruit, cherry and blueberry intensity. There are also mineral notes in there and the close is slightly vinous, chewy and raw. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**86 Giacomo Fenocchio 2009 (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$17.** This is an easygoing but exceedingly fresh expression of Dolcetto with a full array of fruit aromas that span from delicate wild berry to ripe black cherry. There's fullness, softness and firmness in the mouth. Imported by Masciarelli Wine Co. —M.L.

**86 Marcarini 2009 Fontanazza (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$18.** This young Dolcetto opens with loads of fresh fruit, but there's also a slightly musky smell at the back that gives the wine a touch of complexity. It's an earthy, warm wine with a full and velvety feel. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**86 Poderi Colla 2008 Pian Balbo (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$18.** Here's a subdued and understated Dolcetto that has been executed in a lighter, fruit-forward style with informal appeal and sour tannins on the close. You'll recognize aromas of dark fruit, berries and fresh spice. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**85 Prinsi 2008 San Cristoforo (Dolcetto d'Alba); \$18.** Here is a light and thin expression of Dolcetto with a bright fruit personality and loads of berry intensity. Try it with cold cuts, salami or slices of pizza. Imported by Enotec Imports, Inc. —M.L.

## DOLCETTO DI DOGLIANI

**90 Poderi Luigi Einaudi 2008 I Filari (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$38.** The impressive I Filari Dolcetto opens with plush, rich concentration and a dark, purplish color. The aromas are intense and immediate and the wine exhibits a velvety, dense texture in the mouth with sweet cherry and cola flavors followed by mild tannic structure. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**89 Pecchenino 2007 Siri D'Jermu (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$28.** This rich and thick Dolcetto opens with an inky, dark appearance and vinous aromas of blackberry and smoked ham. What the wine lacks in complexity, it makes up for in liveliness. Thick, textured tannins help the wine achieve good persistence and endurance. Most Dolcetto is designed to be consumed immediately, but this one promises more staying power. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**89 Poderi Luigi Einaudi 2008 Vigna Tecc (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$29.** This historic estate in Piedmont delivers a clean, simple and youthful Dolcetto (packaged in a very elegant bottle). There's a pretty mix here of mineral aromas as well as black fruit and juicy blueberry. The wine is well concentrated and thick and offers a raw, gritty quality on the tannins. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

**88 Cascina Corte di Barosi Alessandro 2007 Vigna Pirochetta (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$20.** This organically farmed Dolcetto delivers surprising sophistication with tones of wild mushroom and spice behind bright red fruit and berry. The wine is slightly tannic but closes with a smooth, polished texture. Imported by Casa Bruno. *Editors' Choice.* —M.L.

**88 Marziano Abbona 2008 Papà Celso (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$20.** Lush concentration and deep aromas of dark fruit and black cherry make an excellent first impression. This Dolcetto shows a dark, deep color and a chewy, almost inky texture. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.L.

**87 Pecchenino 2008 San Luigi (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$18.** Here's an easy and openly friendly Dolcetto di Dogliani with simple fruit aromas of blueberry and forest fruit. In the mouth, however, the wine is far more expressive thanks to its spicy tones of freshly ground black pepper and Indian spice. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

**87 Poderi Luigi Einaudi 2009 (Dolcetto di Dogliani); \$20.** Wild berries, blueberries and some natural rubber come to the forefront of this bright, young Dolcetto. In the mouth, it offers cooling fruit flavors with a hint of firmness in the form of polished tannins. Imported by Empson (USA) Ltd. —M.L.

## OTHER DOLCETTO

**90 Bricco Maiolica 2008 Sori Bricco Maiolica Superiore (Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba); \$25.** This is an expression of Dolcetto that shows many qualities, including a distinct sense of informal elegance. There are mineral aromas balanced by ripe fruit tones and the wine shows a higher than expected level of complexity. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

**87 Bricco Maiolica 2009 (Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba); \$19.** Here's a nicely elegant and balanced Dolcetto with fresh fruit layers backed by tight tannins. Try this easy-natured wine with pepperoni pizza or pasta with sausage and tomato sauce. Imported by Zig Zagando. —M.L.

**87 Carlin De Paolo 2008 (Dolcetto di Monferrato); \$15.** Elegant and linear with polished mineral tones at the back of black fruit, blueberry and plum, this Dolcetto from Monferrato would pair with mixed Tuscan salumi. The wine is bright and vibrant with an easygoing and informal personality. Imported by American Northwest Distributors Inc. —M.L.

**86 Carlin De Paolo 2009 (Dolcetto di Monferrato); \$15.** Made by Giancarlo and Davide Ponte, this bright Dolcetto shows deep mineral tones backed by bright, plush fruit. The wine is informal and food-friendly with a touch of white pepper on the close. Imported by American Northwest Distributors Inc. —M.L.

**86 Cascina Adelaide 2008 Vigna Costa Fiore (Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba); \$26.** Dolcetto Vigna Costa Fiore opens with a dense, modern appearance and big aromas of ripe fruit and mature blackberry. There's also a touch of Band Aid or wet animal at the back that is barely perceptible now, but that may worsen with time. The wine is chewy and bright on the close. Imported by Tesori Wines. —M.L.

**86 Massimiliano Vivalda 2008 Wine Philosophy (Dolcetto d'Asti); \$15.** With a cheerful label that resembles a newspaper headline, Wine Philosophy is a thin and brambly Dolcetto with aromas of wild flower, forest floor and white cherry. There's a tiny touch of light effervescence that leaves a spicy prickle on the tongue. Pair this wine with sliced mortadella. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.L.



## Spirits

### BOURBON: IT'S OFFICIAL

**H**ere's a great little fact for winning your next bar bet: Bourbon is the official spirit of the United States, by act of Congress.

Bourbon is the only major liquor category that is 100% home-grown in the States, where strict regulations govern every aspect including the mash bill (at least 51% corn) how it is aged (in charred, new oak barrels), the strength (no more than 160 proof off the still, and no more than 125 proof in the barrel), and additives (water only, no colorings or flavorings, unlike Bourbon's cousin Scotch).

And that's where the similarities end—and the fun begins! For starters, the mash bill (or recipe of corn, rye, and other grains) determines the spirit's taste. A high corn recipe means a mellow, sweet flavor profile, while a relatively high amount of rye ensures a good peppery bite.

The aging process has an impact too: aged too little (in general, four years is the bare minimum),

and the liquid in the barrel is little more than moonshine; too long, and it may become too "woody" and tannic to drink. Most Bourbon boosters suggest that aging between six and 12 years is about right, and within that range the older Bourbons will be the mellowest and most flavorful. However some great, longer-aged Bourbons certainly exist—and in fact, were among my favorites.

Premium and small-batch Bourbons have been driving growth in the Bourbon category for some time now, and offer some interesting varieties worth trying. One distillery even unveils a new vintage every year with considerable ceremony; some liken the production to "the Kentucky version of Beaujolais Nouveau."

I'll leave you with one final piece of bar bet trivia: though it's widely credited as the birthplace of Bourbon, the famed brown spirit is no longer made in Kentucky's Bourbon County. Be sure to spend your winnings on a shot of the good stuff.

—KARA NEWMAN

unwrapping, are echoed by some oak, caramel and vanilla. Smooth, not too much alcohol fire. Mellow, long finish with a touch of herbal and anise notes.

**95 Blanton's Single Barrel Kentucky Parker's Heritage Collection Golden Anniversary Bourbon (Heaven Hill Distilleries, Louisville, KY, U.S.); 50% abv, \$150.**

Extremely well balanced—it's complex but no single element stands out. Flavors are of caramel, burnt orange peel, toastiness and oak. Medium body, silky and long finish, with the right amount of bite, lingering aniseed note. Highly versatile.

**94 Blanton's Single Barrel Kentucky Maker's 46 Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey (Maker's Mark Distillery, Loretto, KY, U.S.) 47% abv, \$35.**

The nose finds super-sweet deep caramel candy and almond extract, but don't be fooled. On the tongue, it's punch-in-the-nose dry and biting. Best served on ice, which takes down the burn and lets the pronounced woody flavors come through: lots of oak, strong tea and cigar tobacco.

**98 Elijah Craig 18-Year-Old Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (Heaven Hill Distilleries, Louisville, KY, U.S.); 45% abv, \$41.** Dark honey color, lushly aromatic, fragrance like a bouquet of wildflowers: honeysuckle and clover. Viscous and luxurious on the tongue, it offers bold flavors of dark toffee, lots of oak, and finishes with bitter almond and a touch of raisin. Mellow; hardly any bite when chilled, which makes it highly sippable, almost like Cognac.

**97 Elmer T. Lee Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (Buffalo Trace Distillery, Frankfort, KY, U.S.); 45% abv, \$30.** Complex and addictive. Scents of cinnamon, hazelnuts, and dried fruit precede big flavors: cinnamon spice, raisinated and plummy, like Madeira or Sherry. Long finish, with a bit of a bite.

**97 Pappy Van Winkle's Family Reserve Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, 20 years old (Old Rip Van Winkle Distillery, Frankfort, KY, U.S.); 45.2% abv, \$80.** Lovely. Dark, spicy-sweet, deep vanilla aroma, and unlike many Bourbons, it tastes just like it smells. Medium to heavy body, with a mellow, lingering finish. Great sipper on a blustery night.

**96 Wild Turkey Kentucky Spirit Bourbon (Austin, Nichols Distilling Company, Lawrenceburg, KY, U.S.); 50.5% abv; \$45.** Lively, complex and deeply aromatic, with hits of Christmas spice, orange blossom and vanilla. It's spicy on the tongue, with lots of woody vanilla and orange. Medium body, this would rock a Bourbon-based Sazerac.

**95 Blanton's Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (Buffalo Trace Distillery, Frankfort, KY, U.S.); 46.5% abv, \$50.** Pour it, and let it sit awhile; this one opens up and gets more aromatic, rich and flavorful, like wine. It starts off with a candied sweetness and touches of coconut and tea on the nose, then opens up to deeper caramel tones. Orange and caramel flavors, mellow, smooth, linger on the finish. Light-bodied, despite the bold, luxurious flavors. And oh, that pretty bottle, like an oversized perfume flask. Add this one to your gift list.

**95 Blanton's Single Barrel Kentucky Elijah Craig 12-Year-Old Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (Heaven Hill Distilleries, Louisville, KY, U.S.); 47% abv, \$29.** Deep color, medium-to-heavy feel. Strong, sweet fragrance with wood and spice tones. Butterscotch candy flavors, so strong I almost hear cellophane

**94 Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (Buffalo Trace Distillery, Frankfort, KY, U.S.); 45% abv, \$30.**

Pleasantly sweet nose. Medium body and sticky-toffee flavor. This would be great mixed into cocktails, because the flavor is smooth but bold at the same time; it would blend without being completely lost. Finishes mellow, smooth, with just enough alcohol bite. Easy to like. Think Manhattans and Old-Fashioneds.

**93 Four Roses Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (Four Roses Distillery, Lawrenceburg, KY, U.S.) 45% abv, \$35.** Aromas are sweet and fruitcake-like, with faint cigar smoke. Restrained, subtle flavors of orange peel, cinnamon and leather ride a medium-to-heavy body. The finish is extremely smooth, with a touch of anise.

**92 Old Forester Kentucky Straight Bourbon (Brown-Forman, Louisville, KY, U.S.) 43% abv, \$18.** Fragrant with cinnamon, floral clover honey, and sweet dried fruit notes. Flavorful: lots of oak, a generous dose of toffee, toasty nutmeg and allspice, finishing with a big bite. Reminiscent of dark gingerbread. Medium body, pleasant, a touch astringent.



# Beer

## SMOKE 'EM IF YOU GOT 'EM

**E**ver since I took a trip to Bamberg, Germany, and had the great fortune of enjoying an Aecht Schlenkerla Rauchbier at the famed brewery, I've been obsessed with discovering what other smoky delights are out there and available in today's market. Something about those deliciously warm, toasty, ashy or cured characteristics just draw me in to the glass like a moth to the light. I don't think I'm alone in this; these beers are more complex and structured than you'd assume.

Traditional rauchbiers (*rauch* is German for smoke) date back to the 1500's and the town of Bamberg. What makes a rauchbier so unique is that the malts are dried over an open fire of beech wood, imparting a unique flavor and aggressive smoky profile to the brew. Common characteristics include bacon, campfire and spiced or cured meat. While it may sound strange, the integration of

those elements with a solid malt backbone and even traces of hops result in a fascinating, eccentric and powerful beer that's sure to dazzle and amaze.

Today, American examples can be found that venture far past the original Bamberg style. American smoked beers are produced from a wide variety of styles, including lagers, amber ales and, most frequently, stouts or porters. It's definitely more of a niche product, typically found as a brewery's fall or winter seasonal offering, so grab them up whenever you see them.


To round things out, we also have some IPA reviews. They happen to be a great transitional beer for summer to autumn, and can provide some crisp citrus notes to quench the heat on those lingering sunny days or warm you up with resinous pine and higher alcohol on cooler fall evenings.

Prost!

—LAUREN BUZZEO

bitter kick. Pours a slightly cloudy yellow color with a large head and strong lacing. Notes of pepper, citrus (fresh on the nose, oils in the mouth), earthy hop spice and pine all abound from start to finish, closing on a strongly dry and astringent, lingering finish. Sweet hints of malt appear and then fade, allowing the copious amounts of hops to shine through as desired. Yet another truly wonderful IPA from the boys who do it so well. With this being a limited edition brew, buy what you can when you find it.

**92 Karl Strauss Big Barrel Double IPA** (American Double/Imperial IPA; Karl Strauss Brewing Company, CA); 9.0% abv, \$6/22 oz. At 90 IBUs and through the use of ridiculously fragrant imported New Zealand Nelson Sauvin hops, wow... you can smell this beer from a mile away. Aromas of tropical fruit salad, Trix cereal, white grape, grapefruit juice, fresh grass and a hint of fresh pine needles dance all around your nose. The mouth is round and full, slightly oily, with the same flavors as was found on the nose but all supported by a deliciously strong and sweet malt backbone. The finish is long and dry but not overly astringent, which is surprising for something at 90 IBUs. A really nice and well-balanced DIPa that's surprisingly easy to drink, even at 9%.

**90 Ass Kisser Kick Ass Double IPA** (American Double/Imperial IPA; Ass Kisser Beverage Company brewed by Rahr & Sons Brewery, TX); 9.0% abv, \$9/22 oz. The inaugural offering from the Ass Kisser line, the Kick Ass Double IPA, indeed kicks some ass. Medium golden brown in color with a tan head that leaves nice thick lacing. For a DIPa, the bouquet is surprisingly malty, with strong notes of caramel, raisin challah bread and dried fruits playing alongside assertive hop spice and citrus oils. The medium-full mouthfeel offers a good amount of hop astringency along with pine resin and bitter orange pith flavors. The finish is long and lingering, leaving you perfectly primed for more. 

## SMOKED BEERS

**93 Alaskan Brewing 2009 Smoked Porter** (American Porter; Alaskan Brewing Co, AK); 6.5% abv, \$8/22 oz. This beer is often credited with reviving the interest of smoked beers in America, and with one sip you'll understand why. The alder-smoked malts in this opaque, black brew provide intense aromas of campfire with nuances of sweet spice and burnt coffee as well. And the mouth... wow. This is a big beer, with not only a ton of maple-syrup glazed bacon smokiness but also a good dose of astringency to the milky mouth. Charcoal, roasted cocoa nibs, wheat bread and hints of cassis and caramel sauce all integrate beautifully with the smoke. What an excellent example of a properly smoked and balanced brew.

**92 Smuttynose Big Beer Series Scotch Ale** (Scotch Ale; Smuttynose Brewing, NH); 7.11% abv, \$7/22 oz. Pours a deep mahogany color with a fleeting tan head. Earthy smoke aromas, presumably derived from the peat-smoked malt, immediately waft out of the glass. They're then supported by strong bready malt, figs, caramel-drizzled bread pudding and a touch of licorice. Strong carbonation in the mouth livens up the intense profile. More toasty malt, cherry skins, raisin and orange oil support

the intensity. Moderately high but well-balanced alcohol, with a silky mouthfeel and a dry, lingering finish. A very drinkable Scotch Ale.

**89 Shiner Smokehaus (Munich Helles Lager; Spoetzl Brewery, TX); 4.89% abv, \$7/6 pack.** A very drinkable companion for your end-of-summer barbecues. Aromas are clean and fresh, as a Helles lager should be, but with lovely smoky undertones. The use of mesquite wood, though often overpowering, integrates nicely with the rest of the bouquet, which offers soft grass and grain. The mouth offers a more intense smoky flavor, with notes of cured meats and barbecue. Once the smoke subsides a bit, flecks of pepper, bitter orange and red apple core can be found on the finish. Overall, this is a lighter Rauchbier-styled lager that's great for people curious to see what the concept has to offer.

## INDIA PALE ALES

**93 Stone 14th Anniversary Imperial IPA** (English India Pale Ale; Stone Brewing, CA); 8.9% abv, \$8/22 oz. This 14th anniversary brew is a tribute to the true origins of the IPA style, using all-English ingredients (save for the California water, of course). The result? A balanced, English-style though American-bred IPA with strong hops and that infamous Stone

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## THEN & NOW with Chef José Andrés

BY LESLEY JACOBS



A native of Spain, Chef José Andrés found his way into a kitchen at the age of 15, eventually training at El Bulli with Chef Ferrán Adrià. With five restaurants in Washington D.C., his most recent is The Bazaar by José Andrés in the SLS Hotel in Los Angeles. He is also an unofficial Spanish ambassador to the United States and chairman emeritus for D.C. Central Kitchen, an organization that fights hunger and creates opportunities with culinary training.

**Favorite beverage when I was 6:** Fresh-squeezed clementine juice. And sometimes we'd make a cherry drink with water, sugar and lemons.

**Favorite beverage now:** Any white wine from Galicia. Ribeiro and Riás Baixis wines are fresh and fruity. They go well with anything. They keep you awake, keep you alive.

**First wine experience:** When I was a child, sometimes our fathers would sprinkle some drops of wine on bread with sugar. It was a great after-lunch thing. Some people might say it's politically incorrect, but I grew up to be a very good boy.

**Epiphany wine experience:** I was working at a restaurant. I was 16 or 17 and I was closing. On one of the tables, there was a little drop left in a bottle of wine. Vega Sicilia. And the sommelier said, "Try this."

**Favorite dish when I was 6:** Fried egg with rice and tomato sauce. We called it *huevos à la Cubana*. But if you go to Cuba, you won't find this dish.

**Favorite or most memorable dish now:** Caviar. I don't eat much, just that one bite, but that one bite is amazing.

**Favorite musical artist when I was 13:** Julio Iglesias. I used to know all his songs.

**Favorite musical artist/genre now:** My tastes are very diverse. I enjoy a group like Counting Crows. And Sting.

**Favorite toy when I was 8:** High-tech slot cars called "Scalextric." And Monopoly. I also used Basic, the old language of computers. When I was 13, we programmed a little game of Martians.

**Favorite toy or gadget now:** "Band Hero." It's great to see all the family playing together. My five-year-old loves the Beatles. It's so funny to see her singing "Yellow Submarine."

**Posters/decorations on my bedroom wall when I was 13:** Posters of the Barcelona and Spanish soccer teams. Also, Magic Johnson. I loved the N.B.A..

**Favorite painting or other home decoration now:** We love art in my house. I cooked for Dale Chihuly, and I got a painting by him.

**What I wanted to be when I grew up:** A singer or basketball player in the N.B.A. Or to be an actor in the theater.


**What I'd be if I wasn't a chef:** An actor. It's the freedom of being different persons. Also, I would love to be rich, and do great things—end hunger and give people opportunities. I work hard, but I also buy Lotto.

**Ideal vacation when I was 12:** My father was a nurse and he helped a hotel owner, who gave us a very good deal. We would go to this little fishing village town, Tamariu.

**Ideal vacation now:** The best family vacation was in the Cayman Islands at the Ritz Carlton. It was a little paradise.

**If I had an emotional meltdown when I was 6, it was most likely over:** I was a very happy boy, but if my Barcelona soccer team lost, it would be a sad week.

**If I was able to rant publicly on a given subject today, it would involve:** Why Congress doesn't give all the help they should be giving to eradicate malnutrition in the children of America. The nutrition of our kids should not be negotiated, it should be a "must."

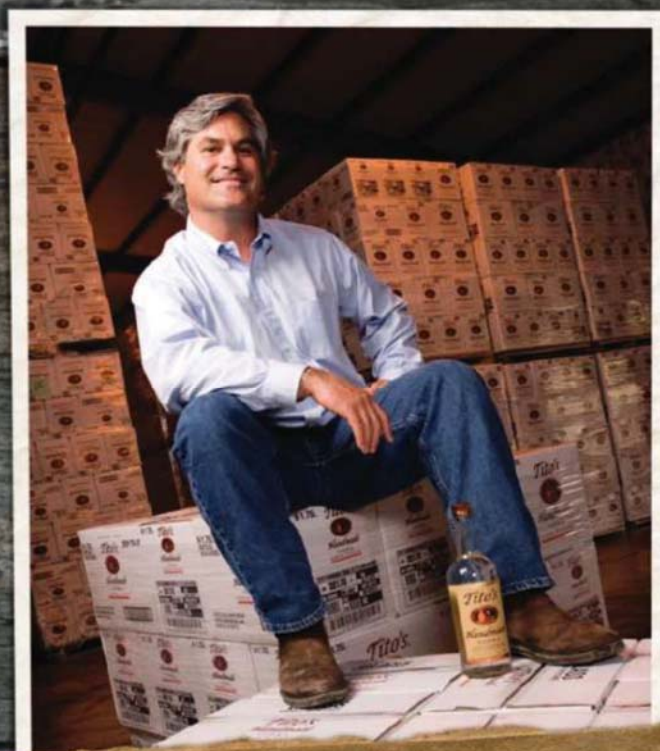
**If your teenage self met your adult self, what would you say to him?** I always loved the line from Churchill: "Success is going from failure to failure." 



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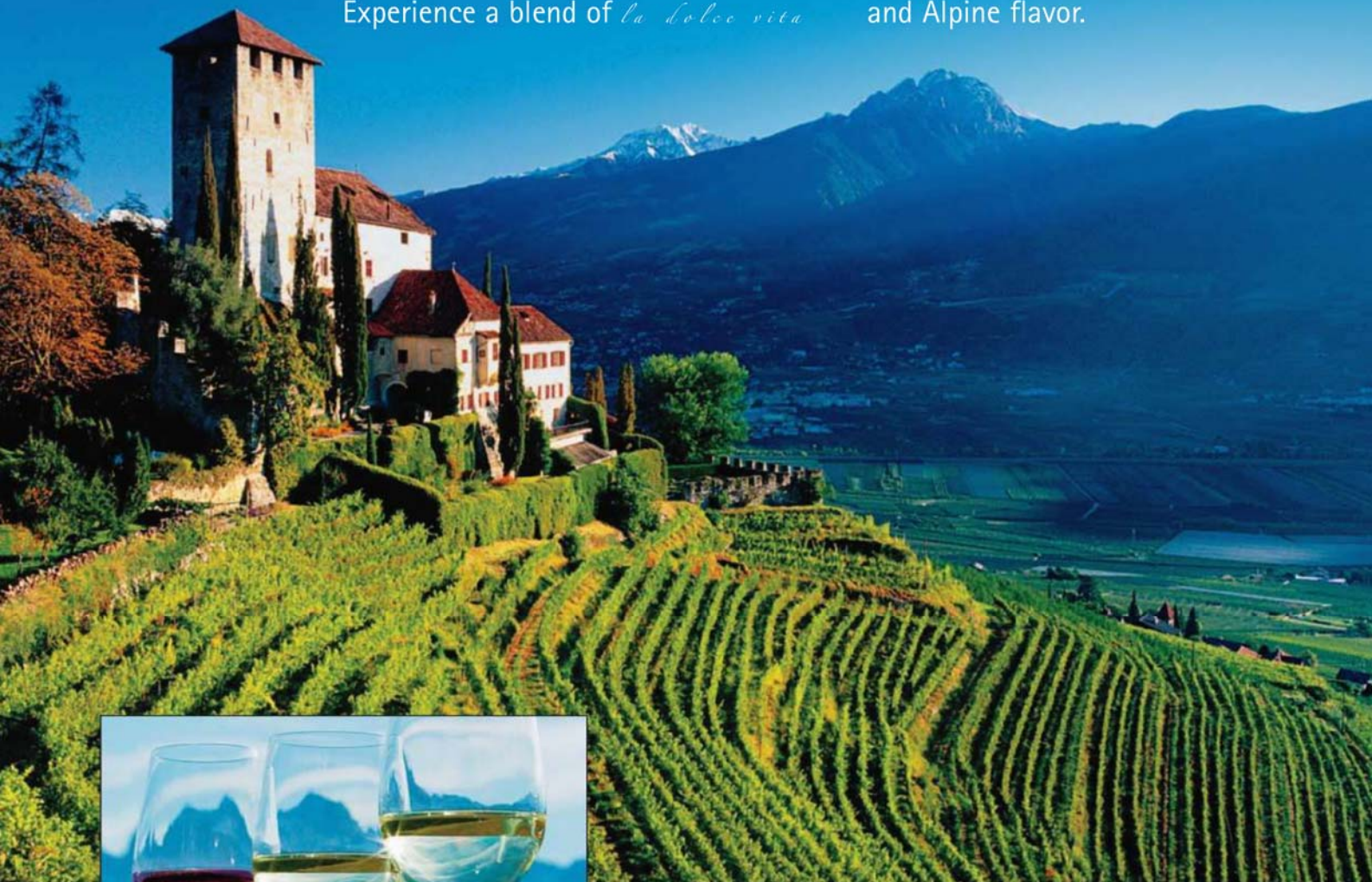
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